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ABSTRACT

Under the 1998 Workforce Investment Act (WIA), One Stop Career Centers were developed to provide training and employment related services to adults, youths, and dislocated workers. This study investigated the extent to which adults with limited literacy and/or English language skills were being served at One Stop Career Centers in New Mexico. Data were collected from March-November of 2002 from One Stop customers, One Stop directors and staff, Adult Basic Education (ABE) and Literacy program directors, and employers via individual and focus group interviews. Results indicated that the population of need rarely gained access to job training services, was unlikely to get a formal referral to ABE and Literacy programs at the core level of service at the One Stop Centers, and was not guaranteed access to information about intensive and job training services either in their communities at large or within the One Stops (most received limited or no information about these services). Recommendations include show leadership on WIA in New Mexico by ensuring universal access to all WIA services by the population of need; create significant WIA policy changes; and improve services at One Stops in several priority areas. (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education.) (Contains 14 references.) (SM)

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# THE WORKFORCE PARADOX FOR ADULTS WITH LIMITED LITERACY OR ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY:

# A REPORT FROM THE FIELD

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Diane Pinkey and Judy Hofer

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New Mexico Coalition for Literacy

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This study was funded by the New Mexico Department of Labor. The opinions expressed here do not necessarily represent the position or policy of the New Mexico Department of Labor and no official endorsement should be inferred.

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We also whole heartedly thank the field researchers, Joan Behar, Lisa Breschi Almond, Frank Ferrara, and Sandy Kashmar for their persistence in collecting the data and seeing this study through to the end. We also thank Rebecca Sherry, Joan Behar, Lisa Breschi Almond, Paula Steele, and Diane Marquez for interviewing the One Stop customers. And we thank Joan Behar for her editing assistance and expertise. Thanks to Charles Schweigert for the editing and executive summary contribution, Alex Kolkmeyer for her statistical information, and to Rena Paradis for her illustrations used in the trainings. We extend a special thanks to Professor Kathryn Herr from the College of Education at the University of New Mexico for her critical and supportive review of this study.

Most important, we thank the study participants, who are not named for reasons of confidentiality, but whose perspectives and experiences form the basis of this study. These participants include individuals from the population of need (One Stop customers with limited literacy and/or English language proficiency, or who lack a GED or high school diploma), the One Stop directors and staff, the ABE and Literacy program directors and staff, and employers throughout the state of New Mexico. We give special thanks to the One Stop staff who volunteered to help find the One Stop customers for our study and led us to the adults seeking services, the most important contributors of all.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This *Report from the Field* is the result of a qualitative study conducted by the New Mexico Coalition for Literacy (NMCL) through a grant from the New Mexico Department of Labor. The question that guided the study is:

> *How and how well are adults with limited literacy and/or English language skills (the population of need) being served at One Stop Career Centers in New Mexico?*

Under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998, One Stop Career Centers were developed to provide training and employment related services to adults, youth, and dislocated workers. The study was designed to investigate the extent to which a specific subset of One Stop clients, adults with limited literacy and/or English speaking skills, received services. Data was collected during a nine-month period from March through November of 2002 from four of the WIA system's most relevant players: 1) One Stop customers, 2) One Stop directors and staff, 3) Adult Basic Education (ABE) and Literacy program directors and staff, and 4) employers.

### PROJECT DESIGN:

The data was collected in three phases: **Phase I** (March-June, 2002) consisted of phone interviews with 120 randomly selected employers in New Mexico. **Phase II** (July-September, 2002) consisted of 1) in-person interviews with 23 directors of the One Stop Centers, ABE programs, and volunteer literacy programs, and 2) eight focus groups with 53 front-line staff from these agencies. **Phase III** (October-November, 2002) consisted of seven focus groups with One Stop customers; a total of 22 customers participated in these groups.

Data analysis involved categorization of the data by type of service and identification of major themes, creation of a force-field analysis of the forces that support and make it difficult for staffs from all programs studied to provide the best service possible, and display of the data in a flow chart of services examining critical junctures in service decision-making. Findings were corroborated through an iterative process where each of the project coordinators first arrived at the findings independently and then discussed and modified them as needed.

Upon completion of data collection and the majority of data analysis, training sessions were held for 58 of the participants from Phases II and III of the study to test the veracity of the conclusions and to plan the next steps for improving service delivery to the population of need.

## FINDINGS:

**1) The population of need rarely gains access to job training services.** Data from One Stop customers and staff show that the population of need is not getting beyond core services to access job training due to three factors:

- the "work first" interpretation of WIA legislation creating the perception among One Stop staff and customers that the primary goal of service at One Stops is to get a client a job regardless of whether the job is at a sustainable wage

- the low wage economy driving provision of services and exerting pressure on the workforce development system to plug the population of need into available low wage jobs instead of training them for higher skilled and higher paying jobs for which there is a limited supply, and

- the literacy and credentialing requirements that act as gatekeepers to service: the lack of a GED or high school credential and/or a specific reading level keeps the population of need from accessing training services; businesses have set the bar to require a GED creating the perception that it does not make sense to train people who lack this credential as they will still not be eligible for job placement.

**2) The population of need is unlikely to get a formal referral to ABE and Literacy programs at the core level of service at the One Stop Centers.** Reasons include:

- lack of enforcement of partnerships mandated by the WIA legislation and lack of effectiveness of existing partnerships,

- a breakdown in the referral process among mandated partners due to frequent system changes that are confusing to customers, the lack of a formal client tracking system, the lack of awareness of specific services available in the community, and the lack of follow-up services at One Stop Centers,

- the lack of assessment at the core level of service of a client's literacy or English speaking skills; generally One Stop staff are not trained to identify literacy issues as barriers to employment and rely on informal assessment means, and

- client issues around reluctance to disclose literacy and other psychological and personal barriers.

**3) The population of need is not guaranteed access to information about intensive and job training services either in their communities at large or within the One Stops. The result is that most receive limited or no information about these services.** Reasons include:

- limited or lack of marketing of One Stop services,

- random communication with existing customers concerning services available at One Stop Centers resulting in a lack of consistency in providing the same information about intensive and job training services to all customers who come through the door, and

- an expressed desire on the part of clients not only to receive such information but also to engage in active dialog with someone concerning the information they receive and how to use it in making good decisions.

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

**1) Show leadership on WIA in New Mexico by ensuring universal access to all WIA services by the population of need.**

**2) Create significant WIA policy changes, specifically**:

- set a priority of service policy for New Mexico that includes individuals with low literacy and/or limited English skills in addition to those with low incomes

- expand training options under WIA to include: making core, intensive, and training services available to all clients as an array of services rather than as a mandated sequence; providing universal access to assessment and planning services for all clients; ensuring that participation in WIA intensive and training services be allowed to satisfy the work search requirements for unemployment benefits; improving the ability to combine occupational and basic skills training, and

- more fully integrate employment and employment-related services.

**3) Improve services at One Stops in the following ten priority areas identified by participants in the study:**

1. **Marketing/outreach:** reach out to people who are not being served (those in outlying communities, older workers, and those with low literacy and/or limited English skills),
2. **Partnerships and collaboration:** create a formal system for working together where all partners initiate communication rather than waiting to hear from the other partners,
3. **Case management:** in assessment, explore long-term goals with customers before determining the services they will receive; tell clients about job training and describe in detail the steps to get there,
4. **Advocacy and customer service:** help employers and teachers/tutors see that people's experience counts,
5. **Referral:** take into account the whole person: consider all their needs and make appropriate referrals,

6. **Follow-up:** create a formal system where the promise at the *first* point of contact with a client is that staff will check up on a client's progress,
7. **Orientation:** provide staff with opportunities for staff to learn about community services and eligibility requirements,
8. **On the job training:** work with employers to create opportunities for people to get the training they need while working and collaborate with ABE and literacy programs to include the education workers need to build skills for job retention, promotion, and better wages,
9. **Raising employer consciousness:** promote the importance of literacy as a contribution to the skilled workforce; encourage basic skills training for employees, and
10. **Co-location of services:** co-locate employment and employment-related services at One Stops.

The recommendations point to the need for substantive policy change and well-funded services to raise the wages and skills of *all* New Mexico workers.

## OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

### Introduction

In existence for over 15 years, the New Mexico Coalition for Literacy (NMCL) is a statewide, not for profit organization that provides training, technical assistance, and coordination of resources to more than 90 Literacy and 29 Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs throughout New Mexico. NMCL, as an advocate for adults with low literacy or limited English proficiency, received funds from the New Mexico Department of Labor (NMDOL) to investigate claims that our constituency was not gaining access to training services in One Stops. This concern led us to question the efficacy of Workforce Investment Act (WIA) legislation that created the One Stop Career Center concept. The question that guided our study is:

> *How and how well are adults with limited literacy and/or English language skills (the population of need) being served at One Stop Career Centers in New Mexico?*

### Context

To answer this question, we begin by providing a description of the need for literacy services in New Mexico and an overview of the Workforce Investment Act in general and in New Mexico in particular. This context provides a framework for understanding the systems that adults with low literacy and limited English speaking skills encounter in their desire to improve their lives.

Adult Basic Education (ABE) and Literacy Services in New Mexico

According to 2000 U.S. Census data, New Mexico is the poorest state in the Union with 19% of its population living in poverty. As there is a strong correlation between poverty and low educational attainment, it follows that a very high percentage, approximately 25% of New Mexicans age 16 and older, have dropped out of the formal school system, lack a high school diploma or the equivalent, and are in need of basic education services. Additionally, the 2000 Census determined that 162,619 adults age 16 and older, or 26% of the estimated 616,964 adults in New Mexico whose primary language is other than English, are in need of English as a Second Language (ESL) services (having marked, "I speak English less than very well" on the Census survey.) As many of the English language learner population have also been counted in the figures for those lacking a high school diploma, we cannot arrive at an exact aggregate total of New Mexicans in need of basic education services

To meet this critical need, New Mexico supports an ABE and Literacy service delivery system comprised of a combination of 29 federally funded ABE programs, 90 volunteer literacy organizations, and six programs in prisons. The federally funded ABE programs, mostly housed in community colleges and universities, focus on serving adults with reading levels above the sixth grade (the pre-GED and GED population); the volunteer

organizations serve adults with low literacy skills below the sixth grade level; and the prisons serve inmates in need of both literacy and GED services. Most programs also provide ESL services.

This system, however, only serves a fraction of the population of need. ABE programs serve only 1.7% of those in need of GED services, 4.5% of those in need of ESL services, and with the support of local volunteer programs, a significantly higher percentage, 11%, of those in need of basic literacy services. (InSight Educational Research Services, 2003.) The large, sparsely populated, mostly rural nature of New Mexico makes service delivery a challenge with it not being unusual for a New Mexican to have to travel more than 100 miles to access a Literacy program or GED testing site. While the data about the state of adult basic education in New Mexico do not provide a way to evaluate the quality of service that students in programs receive, the statistics do indicate a significant gap between need and service delivery.

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998

Authorized for five years, the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 introduced a new way of providing federally funded job training and employment-related services to adults, youth, and dislocated workers. The Act set a purpose:

> ...to provide workforce investment activities...that increase the employment, retention, and earnings of participants, and increase occupational skill attainment by participants, and, as a result, improve the quality of the workforce, reduce welfare dependency, and enhance the productivity and competitiveness of the Nation (WIA Section 106).

The WIA workforce development system replaced the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA), the prior federal legislation that governed unemployment offices. WIA seeks to consolidate and coordinate many local, state, and federal agencies currently working to improve employment and earnings of adults. The new job training and job search system highlights universal access to services, increases customer choice within the system, creates performance measures that reward job placement as well as retention and earnings gains, and elevates employers or businesses as key customers of the system.

WIA 1998 seeks to foster local control of job placement and employment services through local workforce development boards comprised of a 51% majority of business representatives. Business representation was included in the makeup of local workforce development boards as a way to respond to local labor market needs and trends. The act also establishes a One Stop service delivery system intended to consolidate and/or coordinate a wide range of services to support the unemployed or the incumbent worker in search of a better job. The One Stop system offers job training as well as employment related services to support job search, placement, and career planning.

The One Stop system offers three levels of WIA services in a sequence from core to intensive, and to training. The job seeker moves from one level to the next if he or she

has not gained employment after receiving a service at a particular level. For example, if the job seeker has engaged in a job search at the level of core services and still cannot find a job, he or she may advance to intensive services for access to a greater range of job search support. Core services include intake and orientation to the One Stop Career Center, access to job vacancies, information on supportive services and unemployment filing. Intensive services include individual career planning, resume preparation, career counseling, and comprehensive assessment. Training services become available to the job seeker after he or she has completed one intensive service and still has not obtained a job leading to self-sufficiency. Job seekers may access training only if they can demonstrate that they possess the skills necessary to compete a training program, can participate in a training program that satisfies local area job vacancies, are unable to access federal or other college financial aid, and also meet the state and local priority of services requirements (Basics: WIA of 1998, 7).

According to the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP), four key features of the new system include: 1) states are held accountable through performance measures based on getting a job, wage growth, and job retention; 2) states face fiscal penalties if they fail to attain statewide performance measures; states may also qualify for high performance bonuses; 3) training providers will eventually need to meet performance-based eligibility requirements; and 4) local WIA boards will now provide training to eligible clients through a system called an Individual Training Account or ITA ( 2-3).

WIA legislation also includes a requirement to integrate services of mandated partners within the One Stop services system by requiring One Stop staff to refer participants to local services to remediate barriers to employment, career development, and sustainable wage jobs. About 17 programs funded through four federal agencies, the Department of Labor, the Department of Education, the Department of Health and Human Services, and HUD are now required to provide services through the One Stop system. Adult Basic Education and Literacy programs have also been named as required partners.

Besides mandating One Stop partners, states are required to prioritize service to low income persons, public assistance recipients as well as other "individuals meeting eligibility requirements" when training dollars are limited (WIA Sec 663.600). The legislation states that the Local Boards and the Governor can decide on who will be designated "priority" for purposes of serving with limited training dollars.

WIA in New Mexico

In July 2000, the state of New Mexico initiated the roll out of WIA by creating the state WIA and local WIA workforce development boards. Boards were then charged with development of a state WIA and local WIA workforce development plan as well as youth councils; they were asked to monitor One Stop Career Center services and create a training provider process. The state WIA board identified seven goals for the New Mexico workforce delivery system to create a structure that was business driven to support economic development, accountable and results oriented, efficient, locally-

controlled, linked to education, promoting of lifelong learning for workers, and committed to universal access.

In New Mexico, there are currently over 20 One Stops located in four local workforce development areas: the Northern local area with ten counties; Central local area with four counties; Eastern local area with 12 counties; and Southwestern local area with seven counties.

At the time of the transition to WIA, local area workforce development boards in all four areas maintained their contract with the New Mexico Department of Labor (NMDOL) to provide One Stop WIA services. However, during the past 2 years, from 2000 to 2002, One Stop WIA services progressed through a request for proposal (RFP) process that led to privatizing of One Stop WIA services; first, in the central local area with RCI, Inc., followed by the recent privatizing of One Stop services in the northern local area with SERCO, Inc. One Stop services in the East and Southwestern local workforce development areas are currently administered through NMDOL.

In order to better coordinate employment and training services and diminish duplication, New Mexico identified WIA partners for client service programs that tapped into $305 million of federal funds; state agencies would then be adding to the WIA state and local funding. In 2002-2003, New Mexico received $37 million of WIA funds from the federal government. Local workforce development areas received $24.3 million for adult, youth, and dislocated worker WIA services.



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For the focus of this report, we note that the State Department of Education was identified as a partner agency since it governs training and education offered under WIA Title II, The Adult and Family Literacy Act, services of adult basic education (ABE) and English as a Second Language (ESL). ABE and ESL along with Literacy are identified as "mandatory programs" that are expected to offer services through the One Stop Career Center. In New Mexico, these partnerships vary in visibility and commitment from provision of pamphlets describing ABE and Literacy services to actual co-location of ABE and Literacy programs and classes in a One Stop Career Center.

As noted above, states were charged by the federal government to develop "priority of services" guidelines as well as identify priority populations. While the New Mexico State WIA Plan (2001) identified criteria for local boards to use in "determining that adult funds are limited and that priority of service applies" (54), only the Central local board had included language in their local workforce development plan for priority of services at the time of this research.

In January 2002, a task group created by the state WIA board evaluated the progress of WIA and the State Workforce Development Act. The Special Task Force assessed the progress made towards the goals of the New Mexico Workforce System and determined that these goals were not being met. This determination emerged from findings that included:

- Unmet business needs for a skilled workforce,
- Inability of training and education programs to "respond rapidly" to business needs for new and emergent work skills requirements,
- Lack of "accountability for outcomes" at all levels of education as well as training programs,
- Absence of an integrated system of employment and employment related services,
- No "true collaboration" despite the mandated WIA partner model, owing to the lack of incentive for agencies to "share resources, joint development of programs, and co-location",
- Inability of a local job training delivery systems to gain access of "workforce dollars controlled at the state level",
- WIA dollars focused more to career preparation for individuals and less towards "skills upgrades for incumbent workers"
- The "rural nature" of the state hindering access for both business and job seekers to training and education (NM Special Task Force Report,12-13).

In this report, the task group recommended improving the workforce system by creating a single point of accountability. Essentially it was the task group's belief that an Office of Workforce Accountability located in the Governor's office could develop an integrated system to coordinate workforce programs and various government agencies as well as give power to the state WIA board to "enforce program and policy recommendations" (14).

A Governor's Office of Workforce Programs was developed in the summer 2002. This office created four improvement goals around system coordination: establish a common policy to support economic development and the business needs of New Mexico, increase levels of skills attainment, employment, job retention, and earnings of people in New Mexico, improve the supportive service delivery system, and establish one system for gathering all workforce development systems data (NM WIA Annual Report, 8).

While both the WIA training system and the ABE and Literacy system offer the promise to the population of need of achieving their educational goals, this study seeks to investigate how well the promise is being kept. And so we ask:

> *How and how well are adults with limited literacy and/or English language skills (the population of need) being served at One Stop Career Centers in New Mexico?*

**Methodology**

Although we include quantitative data, the study is predominantly qualitative, designed to garner multiple perspectives on the issue of One Stop Career Center (One Stop) services to the population of need. By the population of need, we mean adults who want decent jobs and who have difficulties with the basic skills of reading, writing, math or English language proficiency, and/or lack a GED or high school diploma. A One Stop is the current term for workforce development centers that offer full or partial WIA services; although, many people still refer to One Stops as the unemployment office. We wanted to develop an understanding of One Stop service provision from the eyes of both those seeking services and those in a position to provide services. To this end, we collected data from four of the WIA system's most relevant players: the One Stop customers, One Stop directors and staff, Adult Basic Education (ABE) and Literacy directors and staff, and employers.

The dominant voices in the study come from representatives of the population of need and from One Stop directors and One Stop front-line staff throughout the New Mexico. We cast our data-collection net wide to also include the other two most relevant stakeholders in the WIA system to the population of need: ABE and Literacy providers, and employers. With WIA requiring One Stops to partner with ABE and Literacy providers and to respond to employer needs, we thought it important to include the perspectives of the education and business sectors to round out our understanding of service provision to the population of need.

The data was collected in three phases. Phase I focused on the employers' perspective, Phase II on the perspective of directors and staffs of eight One Stop offices and adjacent ABE and Literacy programs, and Phase III on the One Stop customers themselves. Also in Phase III we conducted a training at seven of the eight One Stop sites[1] where we brought our preliminary findings back to all the studies' stakeholders (except the

[1] We held seven rather than eight trainings as one training was held jointly for study participants from two One Stop sites.

employers) to get their feedback and collectively plan for next steps to better serve those among the most in need of service.

Phase I: Phone surveys of employers

The emphasis of Phase I, which spanned from March - June 2002, was to conduct a phone survey of 120 randomly selected businesses in New Mexico. To ensure greater consistency in data collection and a higher completion rate of surveys, we developed a phone survey of employers rather than use a pen and paper mailed questionnaire. Survey questions were mostly quantitative and focused on background information about the business as well as the employer's current provision of and need for basic skills training at the work site (see attached employer survey protocol.)

We worked closely with the NMDOL Bureau of Labor Statistics to generate our sample. The NMDOL used a 2001 database of Western States Employers to help us randomly select 30 businesses from each of the four local workforce development areas for a total of 120 businesses. We initially pulled a larger sample of 200 businesses to take into account such exigencies as employers' unwillingness to participate and changes in business status. Although we had originally considered a sample of small, medium, and large businesses, we decided against the inclusion of small businesses. We assumed that there were more resources available in relatively larger businesses to offer training and a greater number of employees who could potentially participate. We desired to intentionally increase the likelihood of interviewing businesses that did, in fact, provide their employees with basic skills training. Given that New Mexico lacks an industrial base and has few large businesses by national standards, relative to the other businesses *within* the state, we define a medium business as one employing 20-99 workers and a large business as an employer of 100+ workers. The draw of 120 businesses pulled from a total of 5403 medium to large New Mexico businesses provided a 2% sample size. We also wrote a letter of introduction to businesses mailed out prior to the actual phone survey to inform employers about the project, request their participation in the survey, and ask them to gather in advance specific demographic information about their employees.

We trained four field researchers, one in each of the four local workforce development areas, to conduct the phone surveys. Each field researcher interviewed between 29-31 business managers in her or his area for a total of 123 completed surveys. Field researchers reported that survey interviews ranged in length from ten minutes to over an hour with the average interview lasting approximately 30 minutes.

We did not anticipate a number of problems that emerged in the process of contacting businesses and conducting the survey; for example, returned "undeliverable" mail; more than a few database inaccuracies of contact person, phone numbers, and current existence; a heels-dug-in reluctance to participate; and, sometimes, "the artful dodge" of ducking out of pre-arranged interviews. While many businesses agreed to complete the survey, the field researchers had to be persistent and make multiple calls to coax business cooperation. One researcher reported calling a business upwards of 19 times.

Phase II: On-site interviews and focus groups with directors and staffs of One Stops and ABE and Literacy programs

While Phase I was tailored to getting a snapshot of the business perspective, Phase II was designed to allow for a more in-depth exploration of One Stop services for the population of need. From July – September 2002, field researchers teamed with project coordinators and visited the eight selected One Stops, conducted in-person interviews with the directors of the One Stops, ABE, and Literacy programs; and held focus groups with staffs from these offices. We collected primary source data from a total of 76 One Stop and ABE and Literacy program staff (including directors, front-line staff, and volunteers) by way of 23 one-on-one interviews and eight focus groups consisting of 53 staff members across sites.

We worked with the NMDOL to create a short list of 20 One Stops from the total of 25 One Stops throughout the state. Criteria for making it to the short list were: 1) the One Stop had to have at least 6 staff members (to ensure that the office did not have to close when we interviewed front-line staff), 2) except in the case of one of the four local workforce development areas where One Stop services have been privatized, the offices needed to be a full One Stop (rather than a sub office that does not provide the full array of One Stop services), and 3) the director of the One Stop had to be in that position for at least three years to lend his/her perspective on the changes in the One Stop under different legislation. We categorized the 20 short-listed One Stops by the four workforce development regions and randomly selected two One Stops per region. Technically, two of the eight chosen One Stop offices are not full One Stop Career Centers as the intensive and training services have been privatized in the local workforce area where the two One Stops are located.

The NMDOL also assisted us in the development of the interview protocols for the One Stop directors, providing us with an overview of how the One Stop system works and with tips on when and how to schedule the One Stop visits. A core set of areas for exploration guided both the interviews and focus group sessions and included questions about assessment, referral, education and training, follow-up, and job placement services for the population of need (see attached protocols for interviews with directors of One Stops, directors of ABE and Literacy programs, and focus groups with staffs from One Stops and ABE and Literacy programs.)

The project coordinators teamed with the field researchers and spent a full day at the eight chosen One Stops located throughout the state. These "One Stop Days" were comprised of a one-to-two hour interview with the One Stop director and a two-hour on-site focus group with staff from both the One Stop and surrounding Adult Basic Education and Literacy programs. Additionally, field researchers held one-hour in person interviews with the directors of each of the local Literacy and Adult Basic Education programs. Researchers took notes at all the interview and focus group sessions and audio-taped sessions in all but one of the interviews.

Phase III: Focus groups with the population of need and training

From October – November 2002, we turned our attention to interviewing the most important constituency of all, the One Stop customers themselves. The process of finding One Stop customers who represented the population of need to interview was a project in and of itself. We needed a "way in", or a connection with individuals from this population. We had originally thought that we would work with the teachers and volunteers from the ABE and Literacy programs to identify the One Stop customers, only to unexpectedly find that these educators do not know which students were referred from the One Stop offices. We then thought to ask the One Stop front-line staff who had participated in the Phase II focus groups if they would help us identify One Stop customers from the population of need. Staff at seven of the eight One Stops offered to help. Each site identified between two to five One Stop customers, enabling us to hold a focus group or small group interview for a total of 22 One Stop clients.

As One Stop offices do not keep records of customers in their entry level of core services, they do not have a database of individuals who come through their doors with low literacy or English language skills. We could not therefore ask for a random sample of One Stop customers from the population of need. Instead, we encouraged the One Stop staffs to find whomever they could who fit the description of the population of need and ask these individuals if they would be willing to participate in our study. We know from talking with the One Stop volunteers that it was very difficult for them to think of customers who met our criteria. In one of the eight sites, the staff person was not able to identify a customer. We suspect that selection of One Stop customers from the population of need, if at all biased, is biased in the direction of staff having selected customers who represent "success stories", i.e., clients who have gained access to services beyond the core level.

Similar to the protocols developed for those who work for One Stops, and ABE and Literacy programs, the core questions for the One Stop customers also focused on their experiences with assessment, referral, education and training, job placement and follow-up. We added a scenario of a fictional character, Liticia, with a sixth grade education and in need of a job, and asked the One Stop customers to generate advice to the different stakeholders as to how to best serve Liticia (see attached protocol for focus group with One Stop customers.) Focus group sessions with members from the population of need were audio-taped.

In order to prepare for the training, we analyzed the data in a number of ways. We categorized the data by type of service and identified major themes, created a force-field analysis of the forces that support and make it difficult for staffs from all programs studied to provide the best service possible, and displayed the data in a flow chart of services examining critical junctures in service decision-making. We corroborated our findings through an iterative process where each of the project coordinators first arrived at the findings independently and then discussed and modified them as needed.

Upon completion of data collection and the lion's share of the data analyses, we facilitated a two-hour training at seven of the eight One Stop sites (one of the One Stop offices joined a neighboring One Stop for the training) for a total of 58 training participants, comprised of One Stop customers, and directors and staffs from the One Stop offices and ABE and Literacy programs. We presented them with our two most significant preliminary findings: 1) the lower an individual's literacy skills, the least likely s/he is to receive education and training services; and 2) without a GED or High School Diploma, the population of need is relegated to low-wage, dead-end jobs. Not one person disagreed. In addition to the member checking, the training also supported the participants to see the issue of service to the population of need from the eyes of each of the stakeholders (excluding that of the employers) and brought One Stop and ABE and Literacy staff together to plan for next steps for improving service delivery to the population of need (see the attached training design.)

## FINDINGS

Adults with limited literacy and/or English language proficiency, and/or who lack a GED or high school credential, i.e., the population of need, are among the most in need of education and job training services to gain a solid foothold in today's job market. Yet, in this pilot study of the services that the population of need receives in One Stop Career Centers throughout New Mexico, we found that with few exceptions, these individuals do not gain access to the services designed to help them.

The ways in which the population of need is not gaining access to education and training services just about guarantees that they will never gain access. First, they do not gain access because they do not meet the literacy and credentialing eligibility requirements. By definition, they don't make the grade. Second, they are not effectively referred to the ABE and Literacy programs that could help them qualify for job training dollars, making it less likely that they will become eligible. And third, they are not provided with sufficient information about the full array of One Stop services, in effect, preventing them from even thinking about taking advantage of these services. As one One Stop director reflected, "If people are not aware of [programs offered], they're not going to take advantage of it." We call this phenomena of the greater the need for service, the less the service, the workforce paradox for adults with limited literacy and/or English speaking skills.

In this section, we explore these three findings around the population of need's lack of access to job training, to referral, and to information at One Stops in New Mexico in greater detail and pull from the data some of the underlying reasons for the exclusion from service.

### Finding: The population of need rarely gains access to job training services.

From our conversations with One Stop customers and staff, we learned that the population of need is not getting beyond core services to access job training. For this specific population, the WIA concept of "universal access" breaks down. Having no GED or high school diploma, or having limited literacy or English speaking skills, equals, essentially, exclusion from education and training services.

Only two of the 22 One Stop customers in our study actually participated in job training. Though at first blush of the data, we thought the number receiving job training services was higher, with six members from the population of need reporting participation, upon closer examination we realized that four of these six were in fact participating in life skills courses—that focused on job readiness skills (such as resume writing and interviewing)—and not in actual job training—geared towards preparing customers for a specific trade or career. Given that we asked One Stop staff to handpick the One Stop customers for our study rather than choose a random sample (as the One Stops do not keep a database of customers with limited literacy and English speaking skills), we

suspect there may have been a bias towards selecting those who are receiving more comprehensive services. If true, the "access-to-job-training picture" for the population of need is, if anything, even dimmer than that reported by the customers in our study.

Across all sites staff reported great difficulty with even identifying WIA participants who were also members of the population of need. In other words, staff could not think of clients who, lacking literacy, English language, and/or GED or high school credentialing requirements necessary for job training eligibility, actually advanced to bona fide job training. We began to wonder whether the category of "WIA customers with limited literacy and/or English speaking skills" used throughout our interviews and focus groups, was a complete misnomer or if it existed at all. The population of need does not advance to WIA customer status where the greater levels of supports are available.

This finding led us to ask, why is the population of need that is among those who most require education and training services categorically excluded from these services? The answers found in our data point to three systemic and/or programmatic concerns: 1) the "work first" interpretation of WIA legislation; 2) the low wage economy driving provision of services; and 3) the literacy and credentialing requirements that act as gatekeepers to service.

The "Work First" Interpretation of WIA Legislation

The interpretation of WIA legislation as a "work first" program largely contributes to the population of need's exclusion from job training services. Even though we found no specific articulation in the WIA legislation of a "work first" mandate, the legislation has been interpreted with this priority. The New Mexico Department of Labor's website on job training services states, "With a *'work first'* policy, WIA programs provide three levels of service through One Stop Career Development Centers throughout the state." (NMDOL job training division website).

For One Stops, the "work first" emphasis means that the primary goal for service is to get the client a job, regardless of whether the job is at a sustainable wage.

> *Generally, we're going to place them (the population of need) in jobs that don't require a whole lot of literacy or ESL...numerous ones like laundry workers and motel maids and cooks...if they don't get them [these jobs], [it's] difficult to place them in the better jobs.*
>
> *One Stop director*

> *I think that's our mission: to get people working because if you don't have at least a wage, whether it's sustainable or not, then you're a burden to the rest of the community, and to your family, and to yourself because then you're on some kind of program that needs to sustain your life.*
>
> *One Stop director*

*We've always been focused towards employment. That has always been our goal. Take an individual who is unemployed or underemployed and assist them in getting, seeking and retaining employment...always looked at it and identified it as our primary and fundamental goal.*

*One Stop director*

In addition to One Stop directors and staff, we found that both ABE and Literacy program service providers and the population of need are operating from, or feel the pressures of, the "work first" mind set. It seems that welfare reform's "work first" mandate has spilled over into the interpretation and implementation of WIA legislation. In virtually every focus group and interview conducted, people spoke of how "work first" was affecting their lives or the way they performed their jobs. Although the "work first" mentality is omnipresent, it does not necessarily sit well with those in our study. Across all stakeholders, study participants expressed common concerns with the "jobs no matter what" emphasis and were particularly distressed by the quick-fix, short-sighted nature of WIA implementation.

*Since WIA, it's work no matter what. People are going into minimum wage jobs with no hopes of ever getting out because they have no access to education. It was easier prior to '98 if you were in an education program and didn't work, you could still keep receiving benefits. Now, you have to start working, and education is a second, lesser priority. As long as you're working, that's all we care about... Education is a long term thing, folks. Education should be pushed with these students, help them have access to education...*

*ABE director*

*Employment is the primary objective of the WIA... If you're under pressure to take the next available job, education becomes secondary. Right after the welfare reform movement and the WIA, our enrollment dropped by almost 1400 students due to the employment priorities of the Act... That impacted the time people had to devote to learning.*

*ABE director*

*[Our] primary focus is to get [the unemployed] work. So you want to do something short and sweet and get them working. We don't all agree with it because it's a band-aid approach... WIA doesn't help an individual focus on a course plan in education to get the kind of job where they can make a salary to live on... WIA ... doesn't concentrate on upgrading basic skills or getting a GED.*

*One Stop staff*

*WIA has helped a great deal in getting people to work, but I think in subsequent years we will see a larger turnover of positions, and the individuals coming through here should be trained now for a broader market, by having upgraded literacy and computer skills.*

*One Stop director*

People within the population of need experience enormous pressure to find work to provide for themselves and their families. Although this pressure may preclude their *availability* to participate in job training, it does not, however, diminish their *desire* for further education and training to secure decent jobs. The population-of-need individuals represented in our study spoke passionately about their dreams for improving their skills while acknowledging the up-hill battle to find the time and resources to make their dreams a reality.

> *When they give you a chance to study, you cease to be a burden. When they just send you from one dishwashing job to another, you can never pay your bills [and] get ahead. We all know about the housekeeping jobs, cleaning 13 or 22 rooms in one day. All the immigrants are sent to do those jobs.*
>
> *One Stop customer*

> *I need to work, that's number one. I don't get welfare. Work is important to me. Yeah, you need to better yourself with education, but where does it fit in?*
>
> *One Stop customer*

> *We're not at home with Mom and Dad anymore; we have to pay our own bills. It's like me, the only reason I can afford to go to school right now is that [the One Stop] pays the mileage and I'm getting unemployment. But as soon as that unemployment runs out, there's no way I can pay my monthly bills. [Then] what's going to happen? My chances of dropping out might be high.*
>
> *One Stop customer*

Inability to take advantage of education seems to be construed, by at least a few service providers, as a lack of seriousness on the part of the population of need to further its education:

> *When they (people without GEDs) come to us, they already have obligations and they feel like getting a GED is a waste of time. Yet, without a GED it's almost impossible to upgrade earnings... By the time they're here (at the One Stop), it's too late. The emphasis should be with the family and the schools to make every effort to diminish the drop out rate.*
>
> *One Stop director*

> *...[they are] not going to worry about school if they can work because they need to feed the family...*
>
> *One Stop director*

> *A problem with [the population of need] is that once they get a job – which is their priority, which they need to do to satisfy the program they're in so as to continue receiving aide – we don't see them anymore. Education is not a priority.*
>
> *ABE director*

As on-the-job training opportunities—where people can "earn and learn" at the same time—are extremely limited, the population of need faces the difficult choice of work or school, an overwhelmingly either-or, all-or-nothing proposition. "Work first" has essentially come to mean "work only" for the population of need.

The Low Wage Economy Driving Provision of Services

The "work first" agenda is securely rooted in New Mexico's economy, an economy in which there is an increasingly high unemployment rate, a large pool of truly low-skill jobs, and a much smaller pool of skilled jobs. The low wage economy exerts pressure on the workforce development system to plug the population of need into available low wage jobs instead of training them for higher skilled and higher paying jobs for which there is limited supply. Given the market-driven emphasis of WIA legislation, when good paying jobs are not available, both One Stop service providers and clients alike question, "Why get educated?"

> *[There are] plenty of jobs for people with low literacy – there are plenty of those particular occupations out there. I mean hospitality will take a lot of people who have [limited English literacy and language skills]. The one big thing that [we are] is a "$6.00 an hour town", and we've got plenty of those jobs, and the turnover, the retention's bad... we're not exactly on the top of the ladder in per capita income. We don't have a good industrial base. We languish at the bottom of the heap in every area or at the top of the heap on the negative list... We just don't have economic development here to the point where we can change that complexion where people will be motivated [to get training]... if you're going to be a $6.00 an hour town, then what's the motivation?*
>
> *One Stop director*

> *The employers in the area are generally paying under $6 per hour, and it's challenging to get them (employees) a living wage. Here, you're still at the poverty level at $6.00 - $7.00 per hour. It's a challenge for the WIA board and the schools to try to get these individuals proper training; to convince them that training would improve their skills and their opportunity to get a job that pays a livable wage. You can get somebody to work for $5.15 to $5.75 per hour. We might give them literacy or computer training and they might end up working for $6.00 to $6.50 after spending all that time and effort. We spend $4-5,000 in training monies to train them, and the employer still only pays them $5.00 to $7.00 [an hour.]*
>
> *One Stop director*

> *Wages are really low [in this town.] I want to be an electrician... but if I were to work under somebody as an electrician here, I'd probably only make $8.00 hour.*
>
> *One Stop customer*

*[The problem is] low-level jobs. If the immigrants go and improve their language skills, how do they move up? There isn't a career ladder in many of these places.*

*One Stop staff*

As one One Stop director explained, "business is the top dog", with 51% of the local Workforce Investment Boards—the One Stop governing bodies—being made up of the private business sector. With WIA's mandate for the market to drive job placement, there is no incentive to spend job training dollars on the population of need when the majority of available jobs in New Mexico fall at the bottom rung of the ladder. In fact, there is no incentive to even inform the population of need about educational and job training opportunities. They simply aren't given the consideration. The law of supply and demand ensures that businesses' need for low skilled, poorly paid employees is satisfied.

Literacy and Credentialing Requirements as Gatekeepers to Service

The lack of a GED, high school credential, and/or a specific reading level keeps the population of need from accessing training services. By definition, adults who lack these credentials and/or literacy levels are not eligible for job training. The rationale is that businesses have set the bar to require a GED, so it does not make sense to train people who lack this credential as they will still not be eligible for job placement.

*With people who don't have a GED or high school diploma, referring them to jobs is difficult because the majority, probably 95% of employers are asking for GED or high school diploma and that's a challenge because you have people out there, a population that doesn't have [that credential] and they're really wanting to work.*

*One Stop director*

We found, however, that the credential and/or literacy requirement varies from One Stop to One Stop. In at least two sites, having a GED or high school diploma is the gateway to individual training accounts, even if clients score low on their reading assessments. The credential has more weight than reading test scores. In other sites, literacy levels are given greater importance than the GED or diploma, but the exact levels vary. For example, some One Stop directors said for individuals to qualify for a CDL (commercial drivers license), they need a minimum of a sixth grade reading level; at another site, individuals need only a third or fourth grade reading level for entry into the same course. Variations on eligibility requirements continued across other One Stops:

*I use it (the TABE reading test) to decide whether I think they (one Stop customers) are capable of finishing the program they want to enter and we have a...set grade level. If they don't have tenth grade level, we're not going to send them to classroom training...CDL, we'll go with an eighth grade level...but anything else we figure, and the college does too, that they need a tenth grade level to comprehend the reading and...so that's kind of how we use it...*

*One Stop director*

*A CDL A [license] has a profile, the reading level may be a third or fourth grade level. If you test at the third grade level but we know you can function within that occupation, there's not going to be any problem [to get this training.]*

*One Stop director*

*[Having a GED] was a requirement that we would make to an individual [to access job training.]... I can't tell you how many employers want someone with a GED or high school diploma and if a person doesn't have it, they are not able to access that job...*

*One Stop director*

*That's what I've heard [that unless you have a GED, WIA won't pick you up.] It's like hitting a brick wall. You refer them to that place (the WIA program) and that's supposed to be a good thing, and they come back saying they weren't eligible. So the unemployed has to continue looking for work that isn't available. That's the only program we know about.*

*One Stop staff*

A few One Stop staff and many One Stop customers in our study were quite vocal about the unfair and arbitrary nature of these requirements and questioned the logic that a GED or high school credential or specific reading level is necessary to complete job training or to do a job well.

*I think there's lots of age discrimination and sex discrimination. All of a sudden this 60 year old needs a GED to do the job he's been doing for the last 40 years?*

*One Stop staff*

*Without your GED, your experience doesn't count. I've been at a job for 22 years which I've just lost. I have gone from being a bus person, to being a waitress, to being a cashier, to being a manager. I lost my job and with all the experience that I have, I've been out there looking for a job and I don't have a diploma and I can not get one that will pay me what I was getting paid because I don't have that diploma. It doesn't matter what you can do or can not do, your experience didn't matter. If you don't have your education, you can not get your job.*

*One Stop customer*

Even though members from the population of need have proven they are able to perform well in certain jobs without the stipulated credential or reading level, literacy requirements are used to prevent them from accessing training and better paying jobs. Not one One Stop employee mentioned special provisions testing to help people, whose literacy skills are low but who clearly demonstrate ability to do the work required, succeed in passing licensure tests.

Although we heard no evidence of One Stops questioning the GED and/or literacy requirements for job training access, a few One Stop staff advocate on their clients'

behalf to bypass the specified credential or language requirements so that clients can be placed in jobs.

> *We try to let the employer know that there are a lot of qualified applicants that do not have a GED or high school diploma that could do the job just as well as one that does. We try to not make it a set rule that all the job orders require a high school diploma.*
>
> *One Stop staff*

> *Most employers require a GED or high school diploma but might be willing to work with a client [who lacks these credentials.]*
>
> *One Stop staff*

> *I focus on, are they able to do their job? Because there are many employers who hire Spanish speakers and Vietnamese. They are able to do their job and earn a living. Somehow the employer is flexible enough to adjust to the barrier and can communicate. There is a problem with some [employers.] But employers need workers and workers need jobs and they are somehow getting the job done.*
>
> *One Stop staff*

While exceptions to credentialing, literacy, and language requirements are occasionally being made on the job placement front, these requirements are still being strictly enforced on the job training front. The population of need faces a paradox where the workforce system designed to help them, in actuality, prevents them from getting ahead.

Compounding the problem is our finding from the 123 employer surveys of medium to large size employers in New Mexico that basic skills training for workers is unlikely at best. Seven of the businesses surveyed (6%) provide courses in English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), nine (7%) offer courses in reading, 15 (12%) in writing, and 18 (15%) in math. The picture for training in computers and communication skills is more promising with 65 (53%) of businesses surveyed providing introductory computer classes, 72 (59%) providing courses in interpersonal communication skills, and 86 (70%) offering customer service classes. We surmise that perhaps the rationale for businesses to overwhelmingly not offer basic skills courses is that they do not consider limited literacy and/or English speaking skills to be much of an issue for their business. 93 or 76% of the businesses surveyed felt that employees' literacy and English speaking abilities were either "somewhat" of or "not at all" an issue, while only 14 or 11% considered the issue to be "very significant." Given that only 16 or 13% of the businesses surveyed report formally testing employees' reading ability, we question whether there is a lack of awareness among employers of their employees' literacy abilities and/or whether literacy is ultimately not important to employee performance at entry-level jobs.

When we asked businesses to what extent is it their role to provide employees with basic skills training, only 18 businesses (15%) reported to a "fair" or "great" extent, while the majority, 107 or 85%, thought it is either "not at all" or only "somewhat" their role. Reasons cited for this hands-off attitude towards the provision of basic skills training

include the perspective that it is the job of schools to provide such training, that employees have to enter jobs already equipped with the necessary skills, that employers are not responsible for "the basics", and that employers do not have the time, staff, or money to provide training. The data collected from the employers paints a similar picture to that created from the service provider and customer interviews. Training for advancement is unlikely for adults with difficulties reading, writing, and/or speaking English whether at the One Stops or if employed, at their places of work.

Our finding that the population of need is categorically being excluded from job training leads us to the same conclusion as a December 2001 study of WIA services by the Workforce Alliance, a national network of workforce development stakeholders:

> *It seems both fair and rational that all workers should be able to access appropriate training and employment services to improve their prospects in the labor market. Presumably, this was the ideal behind the 'universal' access' goals identified by WIA. Yet [we found] repeated instances of uneven treatment of different types of job seekers within federally supported training programs. (A Report from the Field: Workforce Stakeholders on the Local Impact of Federal Policies 11).*

**Finding: The population of need is unlikely to get a formal referral to ABE and Literacy programs at core.**

At core level of One Stop service, the ineffectiveness of a formal referral process to ABE and Literacy programs, and the lack or inconsistent nature of following up on such referrals, interfere with the population of need gaining access to intensive and training services. An additional concern is the capacity of One Stop staff to take on the new, emerging case management role of issuing appropriate referrals, following up on these referrals, and assessing the literacy skills of the population of need. Moreover, WIA does not require referral at core, and the language of WIA legislation is such that clients are encouraged to exercise "customer choice." What results is that the population of need—lacking sufficient literacy levels, yet being asked to make informed decisions about education, job training, and eventual employment—is vulnerable to "falling through the cracks" as it attempts to access intensive and training services.

Though we found that referrals from One Stops to local colleges for TABE testing seem to be working adequately, referrals to ABE for actual classes, or to Literacy programs for actual tutoring, are *not* working—despite all eight One Stops stating that adults with low literacy and limited English skills were being directed to ABE and local Literacy Programs for services. We found that where a referral may have occurred, there was no follow-up to determine access to or quality of service or whether services had ever been completed. At two One Stops the directors stated that referrals to local literacy programs had been made when no literacy programs, in fact, existed in the area. Given such fault lines in the referral process, the population of need rarely gets the remedial literacy

services it requires to become employed in livable wage jobs. This barrier to employment is a failure of WIA legislation.

No Enforcement of Mandated Partnerships; Existing Partnerships Not Working Well

Further documenting the weakness of the NMDOL to connect the population of need with mandated ABE and Literacy partners is that not one ABE or Literacy director, teacher, or tutor knew whom the One Stop customers in their programs or classes were. When asked specifically about One Stop customers, Literacy service providers indicated that sometimes welfare-to-work clients were brought to their attention, usually by the attendance documentation required under NMDOL's job training program; these same providers went on to question, however, whether welfare-to-work referrals were still being sent their way, since the welfare-to-work program recently ended. Nor did any of the One Stops receive feedback from their "referred" clients about the educational services at ABE or Literacy programs. The overall breakdown in the referral process among mandated partners is highlighted by one Literacy director who, talking about referrals from the local One Stop to her center, said:

> *If the goal is that they are sending out a student for a specific reason, and we're not aware, then how are we going to be on the same page? We need to be in on the process.*
>
> *Literacy director*

Other comments were similar, emphasizing the lack of collaboration:

> *If we don't know, it's hard to recognize [One Stop customers]. If they haven't told us...They'll get the same services as everyone else... We are dependent on the student telling us.*
>
> *Literacy director*

> *There are mandated partners, but there are no formal collaborative processes to bring all of these mandated partners into one room to coordinate efforts. It's the way it's always been. We're aware of each other. We know what they do. They know what we do. But... it's still not documented. It's more of an informal process. They are not sending students with a referral form indicating to us that this student is a client of WIA and needs ESOL, or GED, or basic literacy.*
>
> *ABE director*

*I think there are areas within the socio-economic system that are turfed ... And a lot of the areas between turfs, there's holes in that system, and that's where a lot of clients fall through.*

*One Stop director*

A One Stop director, zeroing in on the importance of clients being self-directed, felt little need for a more formal referral process among mandated partners:

*We don't do too many referrals (to ABE/literacy)... We don't see too many people who lack a GED. Many people that lack the GED are self-directed people that are looking for work in services and trades. If they don't express an interest in getting the GED, we don't refer them. We're not saying you need to get GED's.*

*One Stop director*

Too Many System Changes

Changes and shifts in the various support systems used by clients may also have an impact on the referral process, making clients vulnerable and causing them to drop out of services:

*The trend is for services, and this is good. But it makes more demands on the people. The constant changes in education, welfare reform, employment can be another source of frustration for my students. My students (as a group) are often distrustful of the system, even of me when they first walk in, especially if you're not being treated well by educators or benefited from the formal education system. They don't understand [systems]. Systems have only made life more difficult for them. Changes add to student mistrust and make them feel more vulnerable. Some people get lost in all the changes, even changes meant to be good.*

*One Stop director*

Additional Problems Related to Referral, such as Follow-up and Assessment

One Stops and ABE/Literacy providers voiced other problems related to and inseparable from the referral process. These problems include:

- No formal tracking system;
- No literacy services available in a community and lack of awareness of specific services provided by a particular organization;
- Lack of communication in the referral process;
- One way referrals without follow-up as well as referrals for some services but not others;
- One Stop staff stretched for time to provide thorough case management, time that competes with referrals to ABE and Literacy services.

Although follow-up is a key component to insure the success of referrals, it is not required by WIA at the core level of services, and as such, is the weakest link in the referral process. When stakeholders were asked, "What works in follow-up?", they said, significantly, that follow-up exists usually only at the intensive and training level of services. It's hard not to consider that follow-up may work at this level because it's mandated by law, and that the lack of follow-up and/or tracking at core level is a serious omission in the referral process.

> *If the person is far below in literacy, we refer them to the learning centers. But once they leave us, we lose control of the client... We try to keep the communications ongoing. If the client is in intensive services, the case manager is required to do follow-up. We call them and ask them to come in for an appointment or the case manager call[s] the learning center for an update... What's working in follow up: I think it's working OK. If we make an appointment with an individual, then the responsibility falls on them to keep the appointment. We will call them again or send a letter.*
>
> *One Stop director*

> *More follow-up by the employment reps, follow up of their clients, check to see if they did go through the class and where they're at...when it's CORE services and they come in, a lot won't report back once they got a job, even the ones in intensive. We need to call them and follow up or write them a little card to get in touch with us.*
>
> *One Stop director*

> *For GED level, they are referred to college for testing. But if it's just literacy, all we can do is suggest that "you need to go and improve your language skills." There is no tracking mechanism and 46 programs... so we don't keep track of people at this level.*
>
> *One Stop director*

Assessment was another key issue in stakeholders' exploration of the referral process. The most significant finding is that at the level of core services, assessment of a client's literacy or English speaking skills is largely an informal process. Generally, One Stop staff are not trained to identify literacy issues as barriers to employment services, although some directors and staff, because of past experience in dealing with clients, do feel competent to do so. They pick up cues by observing a client as s/he fills out an application or registration form, or as s/he uses the computer to enroll at the One Stop or to launch a job search. As one director said:

> *We see in unemployment lines, a lot of times the wife or girlfriend has to fill out the forms because they can't read the forms and oftentimes I wonder if they haven't signed them because we find that a lot of these folks have second, third, fourth grade education from Mexico...and years ago. So there's a big gap between a high school graduate here...well I'm not so sure about that...[I need to]re-think that after some of the stats I see from the... schools, and some of those*



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*come in too and they can't read or write...high school graduates...We have a lot of employers now who want them to fill out the applications here. Years ago it was "take it home" and [they] let the wife or girlfriend fill it out. Now I can tell pretty*
*much by the handwriting that this burly guy didn't fill out this application... We interview enough people that you get a feel for their mental sharpness and if they're going to be capable of doing this themselves.*

*One Stop director*

When asked directly "how do you assess clients?", the same director stated:

*I don't know that we do. I mean we do it through our own experiences because all of my interviewers have at least 2 years experience or more and you kind of know, or ask "do you speak Spanish?" and we have a pretty good idea that they're not able to proceed in English, so I do have 3 Spanish speaking interviewers, but as far as actual assessment, we don't do one. We don't have one available in Spanish.*

*One Stop director*

Another One Stop director, describing how staff assesses literacy skills, cautioned against making inappropriate judgments and drawing inappropriate conclusions:

*It's a way we pick up on it...something you're looking for because I, as an employment counselor, am looking at someone and thinking...you know basically 80-85% of our clients walk in., get on the computers, can search, do a job search on their own, it's the other 15-20% that we deal with and of that there are going to be some individuals that we call "hard core," hard to place. Those individuals need to be case-managed...you're sitting there, asking questions, interviewing them, very subtly looking, picking up what their skills are...It's not just that a person doesn't want to work. That's the easiest excuse you can come up with, ...Well, why doesn't this person want to work, and I have to think that some of the time it's because they are not able to understand the direction, read it, be aware, comprehend...*

*One Stop director*

Still another One Stop director commented, in a positive vein, on how some staff are able to scan customers and say "He's an ex-con, he's a..." and how assessment skills develop over time as staff members work with more and more clients. One Stop directors offered additional comments about the informality of the assessment process:

*The average reading level of our clients is a fourth grade, third grade, level. A lot of our clients have numerous barriers, whether they are psychological barriers, abuse and domestic violence issues. Our front line folks who do 99.9% of the work have become quite acute at having identified these barriers.*

*One Stop director*

*... even though employment reps aren't trained counselors, their experience can identify a low literacy candidate.*

*One Stop director*

Issues of Disclosure, Shame, Psychological Barriers, and Insufficient Time

During whatever assessment is integrated into the referral process, some One Stop directors and staff expect clients to openly reveal their lack of literacy or English speaking skills and to identify these lacks as "barriers" to employment and to other related services.

*First you have to recognize whether you need help or not, don't you... It's a voluntary thing, isn't it? That's hard to do. If you don't recognize that you have a problem or a barrier... I[myself] hate to be told I have a barrier. I find that word very, very negative. If I have a deficiency or something or I need assistance, and I don't want it then you can't force people to do it. That's part of the downside of the referral.*

*One Stop director*

*Some of the employment reps will suggest that the clients go [to Literacy services]; some are waiting for the client to say, "maybe I need to go further [with my education]"...*

*One Stop director*

In some instances, though, clients have no choice but to reveal their lack of literacy. One client, for example, had to tell a One Stop staff person about not being literate when, during the assessment process, she was directed to work independently on the computer.

Most directors of One Stops, ABE, and Literacy programs are acutely aware of the stigma attached to illiteracy and the subsequent propensity to hide reading and writing difficulties:

*If you have an older person who has had a background, has work experience [gets laid off] and their limits are now more visible... more responsibilities put on an employee ... they don't wear one hat anymore. They are multiple-tasked [by employer] and if an individual can't handle that, they're outcast... there's a way that an employer will figure out a way to get rid of them, and can in the state of NM because we are an "at will" state, so making sure that individual feels comfortable to step up and say I need some help in this area... and willingness to come out of the closet...*

*One Stop director*

*In the US, for low literacy native speakers, shame is a big factor—a barrier to learning— and families are not as supportive and tight. Low literacy adults feel isolated by their lack of skills or by their disabilities and feel they're in the same type of situation—one of struggle and failure—again. We don't have the same*

*success with low literacy adults in reading, writing, and math as we do with ESL students.*

*ABE director*

*Sometime you find pride... "no I don't have an issue" when you have a third grade reading ability...*

*One Stop director*

*The lack of literacy is usually hid and finding out through assessment is very important. Then the challenge is to keep them coming back to keep them in the program, to get them to accept the help in spite of family and financial needs... What good is it if we find them a job and they lose it in a couple of weeks because of their lack of skills? There are not many jobs to place them in.*

*One Stop director*

One Literacy director emphasized the need for service providers to understand the complex reasons why individuals reach adulthood with low-literacy skills:

*It's important for all of us working in this field to be aware that there are a myriad of reasons why adults have low literacy skills. They may have had to take care of siblings growing up and didn't get to go to school; perhaps they were non-traditional students and the educational system didn't work for them; or they were learning disabled; or they have limited capabilities. It's important to be realistic and also understand that each student has potential. Some students never read past a fourth grade level... our job is to find an appropriate place in this society for them...*

*Literacy director*

Other concerns emerging from the study were whether the population of need was even coming in the door of the One Stop so that referrals could be made, and whether those who did make it through the door weren't perhaps saddled with too many psychological problems to be job-ready. Several stakeholders acknowledge that psychological issues were sometimes compounded by the assessment and referral processes being rushed, which results in clients not always getting a chance to think about what they want. Indeed, the inability to spend enough time with clients was a recurring issue.

*We're too short staffed and clients are in and out. We rush the assessment for example. Seems true of ABE and literacy providers as well.*

*One Stop staff*

*Assessment is working with the "resources we have"... staff is stretched with 60-70 caseload per person.*

*One Stop director*

In addition, the lack of sufficient time seems to create conflicting and competing interests for One Stops. Staff feels pressured to give time to those clients already in the system

and scheduled for appointments, and less time to new clients in need of assessment, referrals, and other counseling.

The Emerging Role of Case Management

Still another concern involving most of the One Stops was their newly emerging role as case managers—roles that are "works in progress"—with One Stop staff still learning about the different kinds of responsibilities case management involves:

> *The "It's not my job" approach to government. "I'm not a social worker, so why should I have to deal with any type of social work issues." And we've got away from that. We've taken the scope of jobs here and we've expanded upon them (in terms of staff.) We've looked at staff capabilities.*
>
> *One Stop director*

Whereas case management is outlined at the intensive and training levels, incorporating it at the level of core services stretches limited resources, it seems, too far. A few One Stops saw value, however, in developing case management at core.

> *We have been very structured on what we are allowed to do, and it hasn't been until just recently that the method of operation for a state employee has changed. Now human services, possibly Children, Youth, and Families (CYF), are able to provide these types of benefits and resources to individuals because they're more of a social worker or case management level. DOL has never been. We are moving into that role... where an individual walks in the door and you are able to determine that there is a weakness in reading, writing, communication of any type, you can then seek out a resource for them, share it with them, refer them over.*
>
> *One Stop director*

At the same time, One Stop staff is challenged to do effective case management and refer to Literacy services, and this task may require additional training.

> *Let me say this about staff. They're wonderful people. They're career people, and our educational level isn't exactly at the top rung. You're asking people without a whole lot of background education to do this difficult work in talking to someone else who also is not exactly highly educated or having all the skills in their toolbox, all the tools in their toolbox. So how do we do that?... it has to come from the heart, not being something rote.*
>
> *One Stop director*

> *Without DOL being the funding source and [by] having it privatized, individuals with low literacy skills are not being helped in the capacity that they need to be helped... it has happened... because it has not been a requirement that the person who does the intake or interview have the skills to identify the problems... the*

*individuals in my office do not have the education in order to be able to identify it so they have to be trained...*

*One Stop director*

*Staff should have training on how to ask questions as ....[clients] could be offended. Train staff on how to ask questions and how to offer help. Ask [clients] if... [they're] interested in any special kind of job training.*

*One Stop customer*

*Improvement? – staff be made more aware – be more aggressive to get to ABE and training.*

*One Stop director*

Recognizing the delicacy required for case management services, one One Stop director noted that:

*The case management process is really an art, a combination of an art and a science. You want to help the individual as best as you can, but you want to inspire within the individual some motivation. You want to have that individual realize(d?) that he or she has accountability for their success. So, you don't want to go too far in either direction. You don't want to leave all the accountability with the person and say, "Here's an address, go take care of it." At the same time, you don't want to take that person and put him in your car and drive him there... At that point you're not doing them any favors.*

*One Stop director*

<u>"Customer Choice" and Negotiating Systems</u>

The study found, too, that WIA legislation creates an obstacle in the overall referral process, largely because it includes customer choice in its reform of job training services. Essentially, clients pick services to address their barriers to employment. But the very nature of customer choice means clients have to self-identify their needs in order to be referred. Without good case management, the entire process becomes questionable—for the job-training and job-seeking population in general, but specifically for the population of need. Uninformed choice is really no choice at all for people who rely on oral communication for information and who require a good deal of counseling to negotiate an increasingly print-oriented and technological world.

*Customer choice drives the system: I don't believe that [getting people the basic skills and training they need] is our office's mission at the moment. If we find some who desire to move onto that, then the referral's done. Again, <u>it's customer choice</u>. We can't force people to do things that they do not wish to do. If they want to be putting in landscaping all their life, then we assist them to do that. If they*

*want to improve their station in life, and literacy or English language barriers are part of the problem, and wish to rectify that, then we can start the process to refer, to help.*

*One Stop director*

One Stop staff is aware that the population of need requires definite assistance while others more savvy about systems can manage on their own. This awareness points to how critical it is to make sure the population of need receives attentive counseling and appropriate referrals during initial contact with the One Stop.

*I think a lot of this [success] depends on the people you meet along the way – you don't know who's going to push you or who's going to squash you down.*

*One Stop staff*

One Literacy director expressed concern that " It could be complicated and even frightening for someone with limited literacy skills to even enter the One Stop."

*Literacy director*

No Incentive

The population of need rarely, if ever, participates beyond core service at the One Stop. Since "states are not required to report on outcomes for core services, and there is no required data collected on the number receiving services or the types of services they receive, which makes it difficult, if not impossible, to assess the impact of services on employment" (CLASP 7), we can only surmise that there is no incentive or reason to refer at the level of core service, let alone evaluate the effectiveness of the referral process. Rather, the only existing incentive is promoting "work first," which demonstrates the success of the job placement performance measure.

**Finding: The population of need is not guaranteed access to information about intensive and job training services either in their communities at large or within the One Stop offices. The result is that most receive limited or no information about these services.**

The population of need is not being made aware of the full array of Department of Labor services at two levels: 1) as members of their communities, where marketing and outreach is decidedly limited; and 2) as One Stop customers seeking services, where within One Stop offices communication to clients at core level about extensive services is not mandated. Consequently, word about job training services either never reaches the population of need, or when it does, it tends to be arbitrary, barebones, or rushed, and lacks the level of guidance and attention that the population of need requires to advance.

Limited or No Marketing of One Stop Services

Across all eight sites visited, we found that One Stop staff, One Stop customers, and most ABE and Literacy service providers believed the One Stop was still being viewed solely as the unemployment office, and by extension, that people were not aware of the job training and support services the One Stop offered. A counselor at one One Stop reported:

> *DOL isn't known for that [providing educational opportunities.] It's known for unemployment insurance.*
>
> *One Stop staff*

The ABE and Literacy providers in our study typically had limited or no knowledge about the One Stop in their area, and tended to confuse welfare students with WIA participants, being unaware of any distinction. Only one of the 22 One Stop customers in our study came to the One Stop to inquire about job training services; the others came to file unemployment claims and/or seek employment. These latter did not know about the extended supports the DOL provided for which they might qualify, either now or in the future.

> *When I came up here to open up my claim, I never looked at it as a place to help me go to school. I didn't know that it could. I didn't know I could get help with education over here.*
>
> *One Stop customer*

> *I didn't know that it [the One Stop] could help me [with services beyond filing a claim.]*
>
> *One Stop customer*

Given the population of need's difficulties with reading and/or speaking English, it follows that without extensive outreach, this population is by definition among the least likely to become informed about - and hence seek out - One Stop job training services. As one One Stop director explained, people can't take advantage of what they don't know:

> *I'm sure we see some of them (people with limited literacy and/or English speaking skills), but I don't think we're seeing all of them...a lot of displaced farm workers out there...probably take advantage of some of our programs because there's so much dislocated worker money, but here again, I don't think it's marketed so they're [made] aware of what's available... If people are not aware of it [programs offered], they're not going to take advantage of it...*
>
> *One Stop director*

In six of the eight One Stops visited, staff recognized the problem of insufficient outreach to the population of need. At one site, outreach was not identified as an issue. At another, an unemployment counselor, stating her office "does not see a high number of low-literacy clients," identified this scarcity of individuals from the population of need as an organizational strength.

One Stop directors explained that the root of the marketing difficulty lies in the WIA legislation itself which failed to set aside monies specifically for marketing. Without the budget allocation, a few One Stops resort to free minute-spots on community radio and to PSAs, but overall One Stop staff feels frustrated by the difficulties of "getting the word out."

Random Communication with Existing Customers

Having learned that One Stops were experiencing difficulties advertising their services to the population at large, we then found that One Stops were not advertising and promoting intensive and job training services with *all* customers who come through their doors. Although staff is aware that people at large view the One Stops as exclusively unemployment centers, One Stop policy does not in fact mandate that customers at core level be told about the intensive and job training services One Stops provide. As a result, we found that communication with the population of need about the range and extent of supports offered was random and depended largely on the discretion, will, and time of individual front-line staff.

Fifteen, or approximately two-thirds, of the 22 customers that we interviewed received no information about job training or, at best, heard it simply "mentioned;" they were not provided with an overview or detailed information about intensive and job training services or a pathway to access them. Nor did we find any evidence of active efforts to inform everyone who walks through the One Stop doors—including those with low literacy skills—of services for which they may eventually be eligible. In our eight site visits, we did not notice a single poster, flier, or any other type of printed material advertising and promoting available job training services. And we did not see any visible information making it explicit to people that once they got their GED or reached a specific reading level, they could qualify for job training.

Working from the premise that people with reading difficulties benefit from oral communication in addition to written materials, it is particularly significant that at core level there are no required intake or orientation sessions telling customers about individual training accounts and career training opportunities. Without a formalized system to make *all* people who seek services at One Stops aware of the full range of available services, adults who lack the credentials or literacy levels to access WIA training and to move out of core services, are among the least likely to be informed about the One Stops' extensive supports. In one site, all four of the One Stop customers interviewed were unaware of services offered beyond core level until the interviewer told them.

*[The One Stop] is not advertising programs and services that help people... It went well for me with helping me open up my claim; they helped me do that, but when it came to telling me that there's this program that might help me, they did not do that.*

*One Stop customer*

When we looked to the seven out of 22 customers in our study who actually were provided with "in-depth" information about job training services, we found that five of the seven were either dislocated workers or were volunteering to work at the One Stop as part of their welfare work requirements. This data suggests the obvious: when monies are earmarked to serve a special population, as is the case with One Stops having prioritized services to dislocated workers, or when One Stop customers have greater exposure to the One Stop by working on-site, as with welfare-to-work clients meeting work requirements, the greater the likelihood that clients are informed about One Stop services. For example, a One Stop director, who estimates that 99.9% of the literacy clients at his office are also welfare-to-work recipients, explained that when the Department of Labor recently ran out of monies specifically allocated for the welfare-to-work population, the result was less service to these clients:

*They receive less attention. [When we have the funding,] the attention we can place on those people is greater. We have a keener eye...*

*One Stop director*

The Desire for "Good Information"

The One Stop customers in our study consistently told us that not only do they need to know more about existing services, but they also want to be coached and advised on how to make good decisions regarding their futures and to access the necessary supports to get ahead. In other words, being told information is typically not enough for clients; they need help acting—step by step—on the information they receive. This form of support entails more than relaying information; it requires career counseling, coaching, and moral support.

This need for "good information" (i.e., information that comes with on-going discussion, advice, and emotional support) is particularly acute for those with difficulties with reading, writing, and/or speaking English.

*[People with limited literacy or English speaking skills] should have more direct guidance. The One Stop should help them make decisions regarding their future... I feel lost in the DOL system. I feel that I'm not getting 'good information.'*

*One Stop customer*

As part of our focus groups with the population of need, we provided a scenario in which a fictional woman named Liticia had only a sixth grade education and was in need of work. We asked the groups of One Stop customers to imagine that they could give the

One Stop staff advice on how to best support Liticia. We found that the bulk of advice generated was concerned less with "hard" supports, such as financial aid, and focused much more on "soft " supports, such as One Stop staff responding to Liticia with kindness, providing her with information, and guiding her to realize her dreams. Being treated with dignity was foremost in clients' minds. Their advice included responses such as the following:

Give her time and attention

- *Be more receptive, more human. Don't just send her off to the easiest place. Like, 'Just go there', like you're tired. [Help her] so that she can really get ahead, not just have to come back to you the next day in the same situation.*
- *Be more one-on-one. They have to be more one-on-one with you.*
- *Spend more time with her.*

Find out about her and give her information:

- *Sit with her and learn about her family situation to see about potential problems.*
- *Ask her what they can help her with and make her feel more comfortable.*
- *They should ask her more questions....Be sensitive about the questions you ask so they're not offensive.*
- *Ask her if she's interested in any special kind of job training.*
- *[Tell her] what programs are available, tell her what's out there.*
- *Give her information about babysitters.*
- *Be willing to answer questions.*

Encourage and guide her

- *Don't give up on trying to help someone.*
- *Emphasize that long-range goals take time to reach.*
- *Be nice so she won't be nervous and walk away. Some people who try to help you are really against you. They say: Oh, are you sure you really want to do that? [The One Stop] shouldn't work against what Liticia wants.*
- *Be friendly!!*
- *Give her encouragement.*
- *Guide Liticia on everything she needs; tell her where, when, what time.*
- *Work out a plan of action for her.*
- *Organize things to help her.*
- *[Don't] let her forget her goals.*

Although our study focused on finding out what information the population of need is receiving about services, customers also spoke about the way in which that information was conveyed by the One Stops. We were reminded that communication involves not just *what* is said, but even more important, *how* it is said. We found a broad range of experiences among One Stop clients in terms of how they were treated (i.e., given information)—from poorly to extremely well:

*They don't treat us like they are dependent on us.... never have [I] seen a place as bad as this. Makes me feel like they don't care. They don't want to mess with us, just try to get us out of here.*

*One Stop customer*

*Not all DOL personnel offer help. Some of them get irritated. They don't always give us all of the information. [A friend] was told she was not eligible for benefits, but was not told why, although she asked several times, even asking to speak to the supervisor.*

*One Stop customer*

*Any time we have a question, we can call there and get answers; people at the One Stop listen.*

*One Stop customer*

*You (One Stop staff) give us everything here, everything... You'll tell us how to dress [for an interview], give us advice for the interview, and then you'll want to know what happens, if we got the job or not... It's almost like telling us, 'I'll go with you.'... You prepare us. You don't just say, 'OK, have a nice day.'*

*One Stop customer*

Most of the customers we interviewed felt their experience at the One Stop fell somewhere between these two ends of the spectrum. While they were shown respect, they were often not given enough attention and guidance to help them improve skills and get ahead. At the same time, at every One Stop, staff stressed they were overworked and wished they had more time with individual clients, especially since One Stop staff valued good rapport with the people they served. The problem, then, with customer service at core level has less to do with the disposition of individual staff members and reflects more on systemic issues: One Stops are not mandated to provide counseling services to core-level customers, nor are they adequately staffed to give customers the time and guidance that many clients need.

The population least skilled to navigate the systems that access services is in need of the most information, coaching, and encouragement. Given that the population of need is overwhelmingly denied the opportunity to move from the core level of service, by default they receive the least amount of information and support in the DOL's three-tiered system of service.

## RECOMMENDATIONS – LEADERSHIP, POLICY, AND SERVICE

The New Mexico Coalition for Literacy (NMCL), an advocate for adults with low literacy and/or limited English skills, received funds from NMDOL to investigate claims from our constituency that they were not gaining access to training services in One Stops. We questioned how this could be happening when it seemed that the population of need should be a "priority population" who would benefit from the intensive and training services offered under WIA. It seemed right that WIA boards and One Stops would target these individuals for training services to contribute to an overall upgrade in the profile of the labor pool in New Mexico. We discovered that WIA legislation can limit access to services by performance measures that reward "work first"; by literacy requirements that prevent participation in intensive and training services; and by the absence of policy to prioritize services for adults with low literacy and/or limited English. The absence of effective and formal referral, follow-up, and assessment as well as the questionable value of uninformed "customer choice" in case management further frustrates access to services for our population of need.

Our findings reveal that the population of need is clearly having difficulty accessing WIA training services in New Mexico. These findings align with concerns raised nationally by worker advocacy groups who identify the weakness in WIA legislation to ensure universal access of services beyond the core level of services under WIA. The Working for America Institute notes:

> *WIA promises core services to anyone who wants them. But Congress has appropriated the funds to serve only a fraction of the American workforce. Therefore states and local areas need to develop strategies to a) spread resources as far as possible and b) prioritize who receives services, particularly the more expensive "intensive" and "training" services". If these strategies are not developed, services will be delivered on a "first come, first served" basis – which may well mean that those who really needs services can not get them" (WFA Action Brief, 1:1).*

Of even greater concern than "first come, first served" is the temptation inherent in the legislation to "cream" those individuals who are viewed as most job ready; that is, to place the most likely to succeed in training services in order to meet the performance measures outlined in WIA 1998. Unfortunately, it is difficult to study this effect since data on training that tracks demographic information on people served and outcomes and effectiveness of service is limited. The Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) makes following comment on WIA reauthorization:

> *The WIA reporting system provides information about the number of adults who receive training, but there is no reported breakdown of those individuals by income or demographic characteristics...furthermore, if breakouts of performance such as those mentioned above are desired, individuals will be*

*forced to analyze the data themselves, as it is not a state or federal reporting requirement (3).*

We articulated our primary concern for assessing service to the population of need in our research question to discover *how and how well One Stops serve adults with limited literacy an/or English language skills.* We learned from interviews and focus groups with stakeholders in eight One Stops that while each One Stop offered variation in the provision of services, One Stop staff encountered remarkably similar difficulties in implementing WIA legislation. Additionally, One Stop staff's concerns and proposed solutions to better serve adults with literacy barriers are much the same. Stakeholders representing the "required" partners in ABE and Literacy programs joined with client participants to offer guidance to recommend better service delivery and to suggest revision for more progressive policy.

In our recommendations, we take a strong position to address the systemic problems of WIA to guide revision of policy and to a lesser extent offer ideas for improvement for the delivery of services to the population of need. The emphasis on policy-level recommendations is that we recognize that without changes made in decisions about who gets to access training dollars, the service delivery recommendations will most likely, if not inevitably, be relegated to a pile of good ideas with no teeth or backing.

Our findings match similar concerns raised in testimony from advocacy groups on the reauthorization of WIA 1998 for failing to serve the low wage and low skilled workforce (CLASP 2002; NTIC 2002; Workforce Alliance 2002; CPPP 2002; NCH 2002; JFF 2002). Many of our recommendations to improve services align with other worker advocacy groups. We also present home grown innovative and supportive ideas for improving the provision of services through New Mexico One Stops that the study's stakeholders have clearly been hampered to provide.

WIA 1998 contains flaws that limit service to those most vulnerable to economic and social downturn and those most in need of skills upgrades to rise out of poverty and to develop self-sufficiency. Fortunately, states have an opportunity to tailor sections of the legislation to better serve local populations at risk of losing out on services. States can strengthen policy to champion universal access to all services. This process starts with a "big picture" approach to how WIA could be enhanced through a long-term investment in training and education to upgrade the workforce to support all New Mexico workers to obtain and stay qualified for living wage jobs. State leaders must make a commitment to support universal access to workforce development services and build the New Mexico workforce.

**Recommendation: Show leadership on WIA in New Mexico by ensuring universal access to all WIA services.**

State leadership, the governor in cooperation with the New Mexico legislature and through the Secretary of Labor, needs to send a strong message to the state WIA board

and local WIA boards to serve the population of need. Leadership also must show local boards how to serve this population. This leadership stand would begin to address past practice under the previous administration that abdicated its responsibility for serving this population. New Mexico, along with other states, experienced a rollout of WIA that was indeed cumbersome, confusing, and challenging. This fact does not lessen accountability of any of the previous New Mexico leadership for serving all New Mexicans through job training under the legislation. It seems a failure in leadership that the state board, in the guise of extending "autonomy" to local workforce development boards, did not guide local boards who are more in the dark on WIA overall. The opening of the door to privatization of One Stop services may create a long-term problem with an even more tenuous delivery of services to the population of need.

Now looking forward, state leaders can make policy to support universal access to all WIA services through a major state policy revision that WIA legislation allows; leaders can also support federal policy revisions through WIA reauthorization.

**Recommendation: Create Significant WIA Policy Changes.**

Set Priority of Service Policy for New Mexico

We recommend that state leaders set a "priority of service" policy for the State of New Mexico; one that is part of a comprehensive and substantive workforce development plan. Leaders need to create model language to include in local area plans that prioritizes services to individuals with low literacy and/or limited English as well as low income New Mexicans. These individuals who we have referred to throughout this report as the "population of need" need to attain a status of a "priority population". The Working for America Institute outlines the following steps in Action Brief Number 1 for defining and implementing this policy:

*1) Define the priority populations.*

Start by asking "who is having trouble finding or keeping a decent job?" (WFA 1:3). Include in the definition of priority populations those dislocated workers who may be having difficulty finding a job that pays wages comparable to the one they lost as well as other adult workers "at risk" who will receive priority service because of barriers to employment. These barriers may be limited education, limited occupational skills, outmoded occupational skills, limited English language proficiency, and age (WFA Action Brief 1:3-4). By examining the local economy and determining those individuals at risk of being unable to get jobs to support their family, boards can define the priority populations.

*2) Develop strategies to target and serve priority populations.*

State and local workforce development boards need to set policy and plan to better serve the priority population. Local boards must establish income guidelines for serving

priority populations and in so doing also consider service to incumbent workers who may be underemployed or unable to access career ladders without skills upgrades.

*3) Require One Stops to efficiently assess who does and does not need more than core services.*

Because we identify that assessment at core is critical to service for the priority population, we recommend that One Stop and workforce development staff provide case management with informed choice and formal assessment at intake upon entry to the One Stop. Otherwise, the priority population will not be served.

> *If One Stops cannot quickly "triage" customers into those who need only core services and those who need intensive and training services, limited staff time will be wasted on those who need it least. As a result, workers who need counseling, career planning, job development, and training services could be forced to wait weeks for a appointment and/or simply never receive the service (WFA Action Brief 1, p.5).*

*4) Require One Stops to reserve intensive and training services for the priority populations and ensure that targeted workers receive services in a timely manner.*

*5) Develop service appropriate to the priority populations.*

Our study's findings raised an added concern for whether or not the population of need was even walking in the door of One Stops to access training services since the services are not marketed to priority populations. It seems to follow that if the services provided by One Stop are not appropriate for the target populations, they are unlikely to use the Center; or if they do, it is unlikely to meet their needs (WFA 1:6).

*6) Identify priority employers: those businesses who offer good employment opportunities, wages, and working conditions in the local area.*

*7) Reward innovative project development to serve priority populations.*

Besides setting a priority of services policy, state leaders must also advocate for revisions in WIA 1998 to correct flaws in the legislation that have discouraged access for priority populations.

<u>Expand Training Options under WIA</u>

As advocates for the population of need, we have come to see the process of accessing services through One Stops as an act of "jumping through hoops" to get to services. Barriers to access at each hoop or level of WIA services most likely leads to the disappearance of many in our population of need as they fail to negotiate the hoop-jumping to get to training services. We join with the Workforce Alliance to recommend a

number of substantive revisions in WIA legislation that New Mexico leadership can then recommend to national leadership for expanding training options under the Act:

> *Array vs. Sequence of Services: Rather than a mandated sequence of service, WIA should allow local areas to treat core, intensive, and training services as an array of services from which they [program] can choose in any order to meet the needs of particular job-seekers and/or local industries in immediate need of skilled workers.*
>
> *Universal Access to Employment Plans (including TANF recipients): Anyone entering the WIA system (via a One Stop or affiliated satellite center) should be allowed to request and receive a full needs assessment and to develop an Individual Employment Plan that will prepare him/her for eventual entry into a skilled occupation. If the plan demonstrates a need for skills training, the individual should be allowed to access such training without delay.*
>
> *Training without Risk to Unemployment Insurance: To ensure training opportunities for unemployed workers trying to re-renter the labor market, participation in WIA intensive and training services should be allowed to satisfy unemployment insurance work search requirements (as had been allowed under JTPA).*
>
> *Improve Ability to Combine Occupational and Basic Skills Training: Many job seekers are in need of improved "basic skills" as well as new "occupational skills" to enter a skilled job. There needs to be a better integration between WIA Title I occupational training and Title II basic skills services (Adult Basic Education, English as a Second Language [as well as Literacy programs]). Without necessarily mandating participation, the Department [of Labor] should consider how to encourage Title II providers and services to be better integrated with the Title I employment and training system (Workforce Alliance - Comments on WIA Reauthorization, 3-4).*

Additionally, we recommend that state leadership advocate at the federal level for increased funding to primarily support training services. We suggest less emphasis focused on the development of the One Stop infrastructure and more on direct investment in the training and skills upgrades of the New Mexico workforce.

Instead of Mandating Partners, Integrate Employment and Employment-related Services

To succeed in upgrading the New Mexico workforce, we need to integrate support among providers of employment and employment- related services. We challenge State leadership to devise creative ways to combine work, job training, basic skills, and economic development projects to support a workforce who can work at skilled jobs that pay livable wages, that support their families, and that help them attain self-sufficiency. The WIA "set aside" monies for innovative projects is a source of funding that can logically bring together an integration of these necessary ingredients for success for an

upgraded workforce. Client participants in this study voiced the value of "on the job training" (OJT) that promotes an integrated curriculum of basic skills and work-specific skills. In comments on reauthorization, the Center for Public Policy Priorities advocates for OJT:

> *More opportunities to "earn and learn" must be encouraged. No other opportunity most clearly takes the benefits of 'work first" and training and joins them together than on-the-job training and customized trainings. OJT and customized training should be a priority for DOL as a way to engage employers to train people according to employers' needs and to raise wages and skill levels for people according to the individual's needs. OJT avoids the complicated training provider model... DOL needs to better promote these programs to employers and offer incentives to Boards to use them (3).*

We recognize the value of employers as partners in the WIA system, especially those employers who pay livable wages to support economic prosperity in their communities. Jobs for the Future (JFF), a policy and research organization that advocates for workforce development, outlines WIA policy improvements to respond to local employers and at the same time improve accountability to local low-wage and low-skill job seekers. They suggest WIA allow employers or consortia of employers to apply for WIA training funds to "target jobs and skills in high demand in a local economy", to promote flexibility in income requirements to open up intensive and training services to individuals with incomes below "self sufficiency" levels, and to institute policy to advance career ladders for incumbent workers in need of skills upgrade to advance out of low wage jobs (Jobs for the Future - Comments on Reauthorization of WIA, 5-6).

Additionally, we encourage co-location of support services in One Stops and workforce development centers as a way to broker the sharing of resources and services. For example, literacy tutors can be available to tutor basic reading and ESL or GED classes could be held in the One Stop, or the GED and ESL software might be integrated into resource rooms with the added value of trained staff available for support.

**Recommendation: Improve Services at One Stops.**

This study brought stakeholders together to assess services for the population of need through the New Mexico Department of Labor's One Stops and workforce development centers. The list of service improvements presented below combines the study participants' "top ten" recommendations for improving One Stop and WIA services:

- Marketing/outreach: reach out to people who are not being served: in outlying communities, people who are older, people with low literacy skills.

- Partnerships and collaboration: create a formal system for working together where all partners initiate communication (rather than wait to hear from the other partners).

- Better case management: in assessment, explore long-term goals with customers before determining the services they will receive. Tell people about job training and describe in detail the steps to get there.

- Advocacy and customer service: help employers and teachers/tutors see that people's experience counts.

- Referral: take into account the whole person: consider all their needs and make appropriate referrals.

- Follow-up: create a formal system where the promise at the *first* point of contact with the client is that staff will check up on client's progress.

- Orientation: provide staff with opportunities for staff to learn about community services and eligibility requirements.

- On the Job training: work with employers to create opportunities for people to get the training they need while working and collaborate with ABE and Literacy programs to include the education workers need to build skills for job retention, promotion, and better wages.

- Raise employer consciousness: Promote the importance of literacy as a contribution to a skilled workforce. Encourage basic skills training for employees.

- Co-locate employment and employment-related services at One Stops.

On a cautionary note, we recommend devoted and dogged monitoring of two recent innovations in the delivery of WIA services: 1) privatization of WIA services and 2) the introduction of Geosolutions (a virtual One Stop services software). Each and every stakeholder when asked about privatization of One Stop services expressed concern for the population of need; stakeholders feared that the population of need might lose even more ground in accessing WIA services. Staff spoke of potential problems: discrimination in service; a focus on profit over investment in more needed, but also more expensive, services; a fragmentation of services in local areas rather than an integration as the One Stop promises; and the loss of commitment to communities that local One Stop staff provide. Many study participants expressed a need to be mindful of the "public good" function of government training and educational services. Government services require vigilance to temper the "creaming" effect. A Literacy program director summed it up as follows:

> *Certain service should be equally available to everyone; it must be government-run; otherwise, support would go to individuals most likely to succeed.*
>
> *Literacy director*

The movement towards Geosolutions poses opportunities as well as a potential problems for the population of need. While Geosolutions will hopefully provide more services and create convenience for many clients, self-service is not for everyone. Customer service with a live human being is still a point of pride for local One Stop staff who often have long standing relationships with clients in their communities. The population of need is less text- and more people-dependent on individual services of counseling, translation, informed customer choice, and dedicated referral services. A One Stop director worried that "nine out of ten will walk out the door if they [clients] are pointed immediately to a computer".

Work First, Training Never? Not in New Mexico

The state of New Mexico confronts a choice that potentially offers more than "work first and training never" for the population of need who has much to contribute. State leaders can show leadership, establish a priority of services policy for the state of New Mexico, advocate for more training options under WIA, and improve One Stop and workforce development center services by starting to better serve adults with low literacy and/or limited English. WIA requires placing people into work that allows for self-sufficiency. Only through substantive policy change and well-funded services will the State of New Mexico demonstrate a commitment to raise the wages and skills of *all* New Mexico workers.

# APPENDIX


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**Consent Form for Adult Education Research**
**New Mexico Coalition for Literacy/Workforce Investment Act**
**Literacy Research Project**

You are invited to participate in a study that seeks your perspective on the types and quality of services that adults with limited English and/or literacy receive through your local NMDOL One Stop Career Center. This form asks for your permission to use your response in a report in statistical summaries and/or narrative material.

You should know that:

- We will not use your name in the study.
- The interviewer will ask to use a tape recorder, and you have permission to turn it off at any time.
- Your participation is voluntary.

If you have questions, I want you to call the project coordinators, Judy Hofer and Diane Pinkey at 1-800-233-7587.

You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

You are making a decision to participate. Your signature indicates that you have decided to participate having read the information provided above.

_____ _____

Date Signature

_____

Signature of Interviewer



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**NEW MEXICO COALITION FOR LITERACY**
**WIA PROJECT 2002**
**SURVEY OF EMPLOYERS**

*For interviewer to complete:*

Your name: _____

Date of interview: _____

Name of business: _____

Name of person interviewed: _____

Title of person interviewed: _____

Phone number of person interviewed: _____

Length of interview:

Time began: _____

Time completed: _____

Total time: _____

Introduction:

Hi, I'd like to thank you up front for taking the time to talk with me. We know your time is valuable and we appreciate your helping us in our effort to improve the skills of New Mexico's workforce.

The survey is about 30 minutes long, and at times during our conversation, I may need to go a bit slow as I'm writing your responses to our questions. The survey is divided into three sections. The first is about employee demographics and includes the questions that we had enclosed in our mailing to you. The second is about the types of training you may offer employees, and the third is a brief assessment of your training needs.

I'd like to remind you that we will NOT use your name in any of our reports.

Any questions before we get started?

**SURVEY**

## *Part I: Background Information*

1. **How many employees do you have?**

   _____ employees

   *If does not know, ask:*
   Do you think you have over 100 or less than 100 employees?
   *Check one:*

   > 100 employees: _____
   < 99 employees: _____

2. **How would you categorize the nature of the work of your business? Is it:**
   *Check one:*

   Agriculture _____
   Construction _____
   Manufacturing _____
   Transportation and Public Utilities _____
   Wholesale Trade _____
   Retail Trade _____
   Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate _____
   Services _____
   Government _____

3. **What is the type of your business? Is it:**
   *Check one:*

   Public _____
   Private _____
   Non-profit _____

4. **Employee demographics:** *NOTE: This is the area where you may need to work with the person to get the information needed. You may need to ask: Did you have the time to gather this information? Would you be able to answer at least some of these now? When would be a time I could call you back to get this information? OR, if you feel that it is too difficult to get this information, Do you think you could estimate the numbers with a high degree of accuracy?*

**a. What is the actual number of employees OR % of employees who are:**

| Actual Number | | OR | Percent *(percents need to total 100%)* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Hispanic | _____ | | Hispanic | _____% |
| Indian | _____ | | Indian | _____% |
| Anglo | _____ | | Anglo | _____% |
| African Am. | _____ | | African Am. | _____% |
| Other | _____ | | Other | _____% |

**b. What is the actual number of employees OR % of employees who are:**

| Actual Number | | OR | Percent *(percents need to total 100%)* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Male | _____ | | Male | _____% |
| Female | _____ | | Female | _____% |

**c. What is the actual number of employees OR % of employees who are:**

| Actual Number | | OR | Percent *(percents need to total 100%)* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Full-time | _____ | | Full-time | _____% |
| Part-time | _____ | | Part-time | _____% |

**d. What is the actual number of employees OR % of employees who annually earn:**

| Actual Number | | OR | Percent *(percents need to total 100%)* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| < $26,000 | _____ | | < $26,000 | _____% |
| > $26,001 | _____ | | >$26,001 | _____% |

5. **As we know that it can be difficult to gather this information on employee demographics, would you say that the information you provided us was:** *(Note: You may have already gleaned this information from the conversation leading into question #4.)*

Estimated _____

Based on up-to-date records _____

6. **Are workers union members?**
*Check one:*

Yes _____

No _____

**If yes, what % of workforce is unionized? _____%**

**What union?** *Spell out:* _____
(*If acronym, ask*: Could you just remind me what that stands for?)

## *Part II: Training Information*

**The next series of questions is about the types of training your business may provide employees.**

7. **Do you provide the following types of training for employees:**

A. **Do you provide training in reading?**
*Check one:*

YES _____

NO _____

**If yes, who participates in these trainings?**
*Check all that apply:*

Managers (boss) _____
Supervisors (working manager) _____

Office support staff (administrative, clerical) _____
Other non-management staff ("rank and file") _____
Other types of positions *(If workplace uses terms for employees other than those listed, list these terms here):*

_____

_____

**If office support staff participates, ask:**

***Do you think most office support staff participates in reading training or is it more an exception?***
*Check one:*

Most participate _____
Exception _____

**If other non-management staff participates, ask:**

***Do you think most other non-management workers participate in reading training or is it more an exception?***
*Check one:*

Most participate _____
Exception _____

**B. Do you provide training in writing?**
*Check one:*

YES _____

NO _____

**If yes, who participates in these trainings?**
*Check all that apply:*

Managers (boss) _____
Supervisors (working manager) _____
Office support staff (administrative, clerical) _____

Other non-management staff ("rank and file") _____

Other types of positions *(If workplace uses terms for employees other than those listed, list these terms here):*

_____

_____

**If office support staff participates, ask:**

***Do you think most office support staff participates in training in writing or is it more an exception?***
*Check one:*

Most participate _____
Exception _____

**If other non-management staff participates, ask:**

***Do you think most other non-management workers participate in training in writing or is it more an exception?***
*Check one:*

Most participate _____
Exception _____

**C. Do you provide training in math/computation?**
*Check one:*

YES _____

NO _____

**If yes, who participates in these trainings?**
*Check all that apply:*

Managers (boss) _____

Supervisors (working manager) _____
Office support staff (administrative, clerical) _____
Other non-management staff ("rank and file") _____
Other types of positions *(If workplace uses terms for employees other than those listed, list these terms here):*

_____

_____

**If office support staff participates, ask:**

***Do you think most office support staff participates in math/computation training or is it more an exception?***
*Check one:*

Most participate _____
Exception _____

**If other non-management staff participates, ask:**

***Do you think most other non-management workers participate in math/computation training or is it more an exception?***
*Check one:*

Most participate _____
Exception _____

**C. Do you provide training in ESOL (English to Speakers of Other Languages—also referred to as ESL, English as a Second Language, or English classes) ?**
*Check one:*

YES _____

NO _____

**If yes, who participates in these trainings?**
*Check all that apply:*

Managers (boss) _____
Supervisors (working manager) _____
Office support staff (administrative, clerical) _____
Other non-management staff ("rank and file") _____
Other types of positions *(If workplace uses terms for employees other than those listed, list these terms here):*

_____

_____

**If office support staff participates, ask:**

***Do you think most office support staff participates in ESOL trainings or is it more an exception?***
*Check one:*

Most participate _____
Exception _____

**If other non-management staff participates, ask:**

***Do you think most other non-management workers participate in ESOL training or is it more an exception?***
*Check one:*

Most participate _____
Exception _____

*D.* Do you provide introductory computer skills training (e.g., learning to turn on the computer, operate the mouse, use the keyboard, etc?)
*Check one:*

YES _____

NO _____

**If yes, who participates in these trainings?**
*Check all that apply:*

Managers (boss) _____
Supervisors (working manager) _____
Office support staff (administrative, clerical) _____
Other non-management staff ("rank and file") _____
Other types of positions *(If workplace uses terms for employees other than those listed, list these terms here):*

_____

_____

**If office support staff participates, ask:**

***Do you think most office support staff participates in basic skills training or is it more an exception?***
*Check one:*

Most participate _____
Exception _____

**If other non-management staff participates, ask:**

***Do you think most other non-management workers participate in basic skills training or is it more an exception?***
*Check one:*

Most participate _____
Exception _____

**E. Do you provide intermediate to advanced computer skills training (e.g., learning how to use word, powerpoint, excel, etc.?)**
*Check one:*

YES _____

NO _____

**If yes, who participates in these trainings?**

*Check all that apply:*

*Survey of Employers*, WIA Literacy Research Project (page 1 of 17)

Managers (boss) _____
Supervisors (working manager) _____
Office support staff (administrative, clerical) _____
Other non-management staff ("rank and file") _____
Other types of positions *(If workplace uses terms for employees other than those listed, list these terms here):*

_____

_____

**If office support staff participates, ask:**

***Do you think most office support staff participates in intermediate to advanced computer training or is it more an exception?***
*Check one:*

Most participate _____
Exception _____

**If other non-management staff participates, ask:**

***Do you think most other non-management workers participate in intermediate to advanced computer training or is it more an exception?***
*Check one:*

Most participate _____
Exception _____

*Survey of Employers*, WIA Literacy Research Project (page 11 of 18)

**F. The last category about training opportunities has to do with oral communication skills. By that we mean training in such areas as conflict resolution, customer service, and interpersonal communication skills. Do you provide:**

- **Conflict Resolution Training**

  YES _____

  NO _____

- **Customer Service Training**

  YES _____

  NO _____

- **Interpersonal Communication Skills Training**

  YES _____

  NO _____

- **Other (Are there any other types of training you offer that you feel fall under this category of oral communication skills?)** *Please list:*

  _____

  _____

**If yes to any type of oral communication skills training, who participates in these trainings?**
*Check all that apply:*

Managers (boss) _____
Supervisors (working manager) _____
Office support staff (administrative, clerical) _____
Other non-management staff ("rank and file") _____
Other types of positions *(If workplace uses terms for employees other than those listed, list these terms here):*

_____

_____

**If office support staff participates, ask:**

***Do you think most office support staff participates in some type of oral communication skills training or is it more an exception?***
*Check one:*

Most participate _____
Exception _____

**If other non-management staff participates, ask:**

***Do you think most other non-management workers participate in some type of oral communication skills training or is it more an exception?***
*Check one:*

Most participate _____
Exception _____

7. *Note: This question is only if business provides any basic skills training.*
**We define basic skills training as training in the categories that we have asked you about: reading/writing, math/computation, ESOL (English to Speakers of Other Languages, or ESL, or English as a Second Language), computer skills, and oral communication/interpersonal skills. How do you promote and publicize basic skills training?**
*Check all that apply:*

Fliers _____
E-mail _____
Internal newsletter _____
Through supervisors (who would communicate to staff) _____
Other *(Please list)*:

_____

8. **As part of the job interview, do you require any of the following types of evaluation?** *Check all that apply:*

Reading test _____
Writing test _____
Computations test _____
Computer proficiency _____
Other areas *(Please list):*

_____

9. **Do entry-level employees receive job orientation and initial training?** *Check one:*

YES _____

NO _____

10. *What type of supports, if any, do employees receive to enable them to participate in trainings?*

Check all that apply:

Paid release time _____
On-site classes (in-house) _____
Tuition or training reimbursement (off site) _____
Bonus _____
Comp time _____
Other *(Please list):*

---

11. *Do you provide incentives for people to pursue education on their own to get a GED, college degree, or participate in continuing education?*
*Check one:*

YES _____

NO _____

**If yes, what types of incentives do you provide?**
*Check all that apply:*

Tuition or training reimbursement _____
Bonus _____



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Pay increase _____
Promotion _____

Other *(Please list):*

_____

12. *Note: This question is only if business provides any basic skills training.*
**This is the last question in this section. If you provide basic skills training, how do you know if it's working?** *(If they need some prodding, say: For example, are skills evaluated during performance appraisals, or are skills evaluated more informally on the job?)*

_____
_____
_____
_____

13. **Which of the following would make it possible for you to provide more or better training to employees?**
*Check all that apply:*

A convincing argument or proof that training improves outcomes (profitability, loyalty, job commitment, greater employee skill level, fewer accidents) _____

Money to cover training costs (paid release time, hire instructors/trainers, training materials) _____

Space to provide on-site training _____

Other *(Please list):*

_____

14. **How much of an issue is it for your business that employees lack the basic skills necessary to do their jobs? Would you say:**
*Check one:*

Not at all _____
Somewhat _____
Fairly significant _____
Very significant _____

**15. Why did you rate this (#14) the way you did? (i.e., explain your position)**

_____
_____
_____
_____

**16. To what extent do you think it is the role of business to provide employees with basic skills training (training in reading and writing, math/computation, ESOL, computers, and interpersonal skills)?**
*Check one:*

Not at all _____
Somewhat _____
A fair amount _____
To a great extent _____

**17. Why did you rate this (#16) the way you did? (i.e., explain your position)**

_____
_____
_____

**18. If your business does not have an on-site workplace literacy program, do you think your business is receptive to implementing an on-site workplace literacy program to serve workers with low-literacy and/or limited English?**
*Check one:*

YES _____
NO _____
N/A _____

**19. Are you registered with your Department of Labor local One Stop Center (the former unemployment office; sometimes called workforce development center)?**
*Check one:*

YES _____
NO _____
DON'T KNOW _____

**20. And our final question: Our study is primarily interested in understanding the types of educational supports and services that employees with low-literacy and/or limited English skills receive on the job. Is there anything else you would like to tell us related to this topic that we have yet to ask and that you think is important? It could be a comment, concern, success story, etc...**

_____

_____

_____

_____

**DEFINITIONS TO BE USED IF INTERVIEWEE ASKS:**

**Individuals with low literacy skills**: individuals who have difficulty with the reading, writing, numeracy (math/computation), and oral communication tasks expected of their jobs and required of them outside the workplace in their roles as parents and community members.

**Individuals with limited English speaking skills:** individuals for whom English is not their first language, and who do not command a basic knowledge of the language and vocabulary. These individuals have difficulty understanding and participating in conversations in English.

**Basic Skills Training:** training in reading/writing, math/computation, ESOL (English to Speakers of Other Languages, or ESL, English as a Second Language), computer skills, and oral communication/interpersonal skills.

**SURVEY OF ONE STOP CAREER CENTER STAFF**
**NEW MEXICO COALITION FOR LITERACY**
**AND WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT PROJECT 2002**

Purpose of the Research: The New Mexico Coalition for Literacy has been funded by the Department of Labor to conduct a needs assessment of employers, One Stop Career Centers, WIA service providers, and WIA participants throughout New Mexico to learn about the types and quality of basic skills services that adults with limited English and/or literacy receive. This survey is one part of our assessment process and is designed to give us demographic information about staffs at One Stop Centers.

Instructions: Please take a minute to complete this survey and return it to your One Stop Director. You do not need to put your name on this survey. Thank you!

1. What is your position at your One Stop Center? *(Please write in your job title)*

   _____

2. How long have you been in this position? *(Check one)*
   _____ less than 6 months
   _____ between 6 months and 1 year
   _____ more than one year but less than 2 years
   _____ more than 2 years but less than 5 years
   _____ more than 5 years but less than 10 years
   _____ more than 10 years

3. Are you full-time or part-time in this position? *(Check one)*
   _____ full-time staff (equal to or more than 35 hours per week)
   _____ part-time staff (less than 35 hours per week)

4. What is your racial/ethnic identity? *(Check all that apply)*
   _____ Hispanic
   _____ Indian
   _____ Anglo
   _____ other

   *If you checked "other", please write in your racial/ethnic identity:*

   _____

5. Are you female or male? *(Check one)*
   _____ female
   _____ male

6. What is your educational level? *(Check one)*
   _____ highest degree is a high school diploma or GED
   _____ highest degree is an associate's
   _____ highest degree is a bachelor's
   _____ highest degree is a master's
   _____ highest degree is a doctorate

**Interview with One Stop Career Center Director**
**NMCL/WIA Literacy Research Project 2002**

[Note: Interviewer should have with her two copies of the Human Consent Form that she herself has already signed, and extra copies of the Staff Demographic Survey Forms.]

Introduction: The New Mexico Coalition for Literacy has been funded by the Department of Labor to conduct a needs assessment of employers, One-Stop Career Centers, WIA service providers (ABE & literacy programs), and WIA participants throughout New Mexico to learn about the types and quality of basic skills services that adults with limited English and/or literacy receive. As a One Stop Director, you provide a vital perspective.

Human Consent Form and Taping: Before we begin, I'd like to know if you've had the chance to look over the human consent form we sent via e-mail and whether you've any questions about your participation in the research project or how the information will be used? If not, would you sign these two copies—one for you to keep, one for me. If at any point during the interview you want to turn off the recorder, it's fine. The most important thing is that you feel comfortable.

Staff Demographic Surveys: Prior to this meeting, we also mailed you a number of staff surveys. I'm wondering how many staff you have in total and how many completed surveys you've been able to collect and can give to me now? If need be, I'd be happy to give you extra surveys for staff—who have not already done so—to complete.

Definitions: In this interview, we are focusing on WIA customers, and I just want to make sure we're on the same page. By WIA customers I mean people who have come to One Stop Centers and receive intensive or pre-vocational services for improving literacy or English language skills.

Any questions before we begin?

1. BELIEFS ABOUT LITERACY

***I want to start by getting your perspective on how much of an issue limited literacy and/or English skills is to the workplace.***

- **In the 80s and 90s, a prevailing or popular view was that workers lacked the literacy skills to do their jobs.**
  - What do you think about this view?
  - Why do you think this way?
  - If your view has changed, what influenced your change in thinking?

- **There is a common perception that the Workforce Investment Act has narrowed the focus of literacy education from a broad, general education to education specifically for employment.**

  - Would you agree?
  - What do you think the focus of literacy education should be?

## 2. SERVING WIA CUSTOMERS

Our next questions explore what you do with a person who comes in looking for a job and has low literacy and/or English language skills. We'll look at several components: assessment, referral, service, follow-up, and job placement.

Assessment:

- How do you assess a client's literacy and/or English language skills?
- What is working in the assessment process?
- How could the assessment process be improved?

Referral:

- What is the process for referring One Stop clients to literacy or ABE programs? (For example, do you give the client the information and have the client call? Do *you* make a call to the program? If the program is on site, how does the process work?)
- What is your experience with students being referred *from* literacy or ABE programs *to* your center?
- What is working in the referral processes?
- How could the referral processes be improved?

*Service:*

- What types of tensions and/or challenges do you face in terms of getting people with low literacy and/or English language skills the basic skills and job training they need and desire? (Are there any requirements around time limits and documentation with "special" populations such as TANF – Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, or welfare-to-work recipients?)
- What kinds of feedback, if any, do you receive from WIA customers about the services they receive in literacy and/or ABE programs?
- What is working in terms of WIA customers getting the basic skills and job training skills they need?
- How could services to adults with limited literacy and/or English language skills be improved?

*Follow-up:*

- Once a WIA customer is referred to a literacy and/or ABE program, what
- types of follow-up are provided, if any? (For example, do you make sure clients still check in with their employment counselors or case managers? Do employment counselors ever communicate with the clients' teachers? If clients drop out of a literacy program, what are the consequences?)
- What is working in terms of follow-up?
- How could follow-up be improved?

*Job placement*

- Do literacy classes make a difference for job placement? (Do the classes make jobs *easier* to get, *and* do they increase the likelihood of clients getting *decent* jobs, etc.) Can you give a specific example of when literacy classes have made a difference and when they haven't? Which of these two scenarios is more common?
- What is working in terms of getting jobs for people with low literacy skills? (Consider both those who go to literacy training and those who do not participate in such classes.)
- How could job placement for adults with limited literacy and/or English language skills be improved?

**3. WRAP-UP**

- Recently there have been a lot of changes in employment offices from JTPA to WIA and now to privatization. What are your thoughts about, and experiences with, how these changes affect the services that adults with limited literacy and/or English skills receive in One Stops? Do you think the trend is for fewer services or more? Explain.

- You've probably gathered that the main point of this interview has been to hear your perspectives about how well you feel adults who come to your One Stop and who have limited literacy and/or English skills are being served, specifically in terms of receiving the education and training they need and in getting a job. Is there anything else you would like to add to help us better understand the experiences of these adults?

- As you know, we will be providing a training for your staff on issues of literacy

- and serving adults with limited literacy and/or English skills. We've covered a lot of ground, but are there any other needs or issues around literacy that you feel we should address in our training, issues that would benefit your staff?

***[NOTE: GIVE THE DIRECTOR THE HANDOUT "OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT" AND A POSTER FROM THE COALITION. LEAVE WITH A SIGNED HUMAN CONSENT FORM AND COPIES OF ALL THE COMPLETED STAFF DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEYS.]***

**Interview with Directors of ABE and Literacy Programs**
**New Mexico Coalition for Literacy/WIA Literacy Research Project 2002**

*[Note: Interviewer should have with her two copies of the Human Consent Form that she herself has already signed.]*

Introduction: The New Mexico Coalition for Literacy has been funded by the Department of Labor to conduct a needs assessment of employers, One-Stop Career Centers, WIA service providers (ABE & literacy programs), and WIA customers throughout New Mexico to learn about the types and quality of basic skills services that adults with limited English and/or literacy receive. As a director of an ABE (or literacy) program, you provide a vital perspective .

Human Consent Form and Taping: Before we begin, I'd like to know if you've had the chance to look over the human consent form we sent via e-mail and whether you've any questions about your participation in the research project or how the information will be used? If not, would you sign these two copies—one for you to keep, one for me. If at any point during the interview you want to turn off the recorder, it's fine. The most important thing is that you feel comfortable.

Annual report to the State Department of Education: One last thing. I'm hoping you've had a chance to make a copy for me of your program's annual report to the State Dept. of Education, which I'd like to collect now. As I explained on the phone, rather than take up our interview time with gathering demographic information about your program, we can sift the information we need from the report.

Definitions: I'm going to be referring to the Workforce Investment Act and to WIA Customers throughout the interview, and I want to go over what I mean by these terms so that we're both on the same page.

> Workforce Investment Act: The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 seeks to consolidate employment and education services into a "seamless" system to better serve adults in need of education and training. It gave rise to the creation of One Stop Career Centers.
>
> WIA Customers: These are the people who come to One Stop Centers and receive "intensive" or pre-vocational services for improving literacy or English language skills. They include displaced workers, disabled workers, TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) recipients, welfare-to-work recipients, and youth.

Any questions before we begin?

BELIEFS ABOUT LITERACY

I want to start by getting your perspective on how much of an issue limited literacy and/or English skills is to the workplace.

- **In the 80s and 90s, a prevailing or popular view was that workers lacked the literacy skills to do their jobs.**
  - What do you think about this view?
  - Why do you think this way?
  - If your view has changed, what influenced your change in thinking?

- **There is a common perception that the Workforce Investment Act has narrowed the focus of literacy education from a broad, general education to education specifically for employment.**
  - Would you agree?
  - What do you think the focus of literacy education should be?

**B.** SERVING WIA CUSTOMERS

Do you know who the WIA customers are in your program? I ask, because if you do, we'll talk specifically about WIA customers—those who have gone to a One Stop and are coming to you for basic skills training; but, if you don't know who the WIA customers are in your program, we'll just talk about the experience of the average student.

**[If yes, continue with the questions directly below; if no, go to the questions on the next page.]**

Referral:

- How does the referral process work between the local One Stop and your program? (Consider how the referral works in both directions: from the One Stop to the literacy/ABE program and also from the literacy/ABE program to the One Stop.)
- What is working in the referral process?
- How could the referral process be improved?

Assessment:

- How does assessment of WIA customers work? (What types of information are you collecting? Who does the assessment—the One Stop, your program, or both?)
- What is working in the assessment process?
- How could the assessment process be improved?

Service provided to WIA customers:

- What types of services do you provide WIA customers? (Consider types of classes, intensity of classes, counseling, advocacy, etc.)
- What types of tensions and/or challenges do you face in terms of getting WIA customers the basic skills training they need and desire? (Are there any requirements around time limits and documentation with "special" populations such as TANF or welfare-to-work recipients?)
- What kinds of feedback, if any, do you receive from WIA customers about the services they receive at the One Stop?
- What is working in terms of the services WIA customers receive in your program? (Consider instructional services as well as counseling and advocacy and any other types of services you may offer.)
- How could services to WIA customers in your program be improved?

Follow-up:

- Once a WIA customer drops out or finishes a class, what happens? Do you provide any follow-up? (For example, do you call the counselor at the One Stop?)
- What is working in terms of follow-up?
- How could follow-up be improved?

*Job Placement:*

- Are literacy and ESOL training making a difference in getting WIA customers jobs? (Do the classes make jobs *easier* to get, *and* do they increase the likelihood of WIA customers getting *decent* jobs, etc.) Can you give a specific example of when literacy classes have made a difference and when they haven't? Which of these two scenarios is more common?
- What is working in terms of helping WIA customers get jobs?
- How could the job placement process be improved?

*[If interviewee does not know who the WIA participants are, say:]*

**Let's look at the experience of the average student in your program.**

Referral:

- How does the referral process work? (Consider who refers students *to you*—is it individuals in the community, local service organizations? Or does it work the other way around: Do you refer students to any service groups *outside* your program? Or does it work both ways?)
- What is working in the referral process?
- How could the referral process be improved?

Assessment:

- During intake, what types of information do you collect about students?
- How well is the assessment process working?
- How could the assessment process be improved?

Service:

- What types of services do you provide students? (Consider types of classes, intensity of classes, counseling, advocacy, etc.)
- What types of tensions and/or challenges do you face in terms of getting students the basic skills they need and desire? Are there any requirements around time limits and documentation with "special" populations you may be aware of, such as TANF or welfare-to-work recipients? What kinds of feedback, if any, do you receive from students about the services they receive in your program?
- What is working in terms of the services students receive in your program? (Consider instructional services as well as counseling and advocacy and any other types of services you may offer.)
- How could services to students in your program be improved?

Follow-up:

- Once a student drops out or finishes a class, what happens? Do you provide any follow-up? (For example, do you call the student or write to her?)
- What is working in terms of follow-up?
- How could follow-up be improved?

*Job Placement*

- Are literacy and ESOL training making a difference in getting students jobs? (Do the classes make jobs *easier* to get, *and* do they increase the likelihood of students getting *decent* jobs, etc.) Can you give a specific example of when literacy classes have made a difference and when they haven't? Which of these two scenarios is more common?
- What is working in terms of helping students get jobs?
- How could the job placement process be improved?

**Reflection:**

- **What do you think about *not* being made aware of which students are WIA customers? Has this raised any questions or concerns for you?**

**C. WRAP-UP**

- Recently there have been a lot of changes in employment offices from JTPA to WIA and now to privatization. What are your thoughts about, and experiences

- with, how these changes affect the services that adults with limited literacy and/or English skills receive? Do you think the trend is for fewer services or more? Explain.

- You've probably gathered that the main point of this interview has been to hear your perspectives about how well you feel adults who come to a One Stop Career Center (or to your ABE or literacy program), and who have limited literacy and/or English language skills, are being served, specifically in terms of receiving the education and training they need and in getting a job. Is there anything else you would like to add to help us better understand the experiences of these adults?

- As you know, we will do a training with your staff together with One Stop staff. Are there any other needs or issues around better serving WIA customers with limited English and/or literacy that you feel we should address in our training, issues that would benefit your staff?

*[NOTE: GIVE THE DIRECTOR THE HANDOUT, "OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT" AND A POSTER FROM THE COALITION. LEAVE WITH A SIGNED HUMAN CONSENT FORM AND A COPY OF THE ANNUAL REPORT TO THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (THE LATTER FROM ABE PROGRAMS ONLY)]*

**Focus Group Protocol for One Stop Staff and ABE/Literacy Provider Staff**
**NMCL/WIA Literacy Research Project 2002**

*[All boxed items below should be posted on newsprint beforehand. Facilitator should also come prepared with consent forms that she herself has already signed and with stipend forms that some of the participants will fill out when the focus group is over.]*

1. **Introduction** (35 minutes)

The Welcome

***Welcome everyone to the focus group. Ask people to introduce themselves by saying where they work and what their role is at their workplace. If someone is a director of an ABE or literacy program and also teaches, ask him or her to take on the role of teacher for today's focus group.***

Purpose of the Research

*Briefly explain*:

The New Mexico Coalition for Literacy received a grant from the NM Department of Labor to conduct a needs assessment of a wide variety of stakeholders to better understand the type and quality of basic skills services that adults with limited literacy and/or English speaking skills receive. We are here to learn from you about how well you feel these adults are being served in your respective programs. We h1ave already interviewed 120 employers throughout the state, and we are in the process of interviewing the directors of your One Stop Career Centers and your literacy and ABE programs. We will also be interviewing actual WIA participants who need and seek services.

Purpose of the Focus Group

The purpose of the focus group is to get information and ideas from you. Your experience is valid and important for us to understand. There are no "right" answers—only your perspectives based on your experience.

***Go over the specific focus group objectives using the following points written on newsprint:***

**Focus Group Objectives**

- To hear your perspectives about how well you feel that adults with limited literacy and/or English speaking skills are being served in your respective programs.
- To gather information about your needs and concerns for better serving this population.
- To support those of you in literacy/ABE programs *in learning* more about One Stop Career Centers, and those of you in One Stop Career Centers *in learning* more about the literacy/ABE programs in your area.

How Information from the Focus Group Will Be Used

The information from this focus group will be used by the NMCL in two ways: 1) we will incorporate your perspectives in our final report to the state DOL; and 2) we will use the information as the basis for a training about literacy issues that we will provide for you later on.

Research Consent Forms

***Hand out the research consent forms and explain that we will be writing a report of what we have learned, that we will not be using their names on reports, and that they have the right to turn off the tape recorder if at any point they feel uncomfortable. Emphasize that their participation is voluntary. Give people a moment to ask any questions and to sign two consent forms – one for them to keep and one for us. (Make sure you sign these before handing them out.)***

Ground Rules

Today's session won't just be one large discussion for the next 1 and ½ hours—there will in fact be a variety of activities—and we want to make our time together as fruitful as we can. We therefore ask that you agree to the following ways (posted on newsprint) to participate in this group.

*Read aloud*:

Ground Rules

- Everyone tries to contribute equally.
- Listen carefully to what others are saying.
- Ask questions about the process if at any time you are confused about what we're doing or why.
- Refrain from convincing others of your perspective. We want to hear all of your perspectives rather than ask that you come to consensus around specific questions or concerns.

***Ask the group if they have any other ground rules to add that would enable them to participate fully in the group.***

***Ask if anyone has any questions at all about the purpose of our meeting today.***

2. **Beliefs about literacy** (30 minutes)

***Explain that during the focus group you will be referring to the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and to WIA participants, and that you would like to provide a definition of these terms so that everyone's on the same page.***

Definitions

Workforce Investment Act: The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 seeks to consolidate employment and education services into a "seamless" system to better serve adults in need of education and training. It gave rise to the creation of One Stop Career Centers.

WIA customers: People who have come to One Stop Centers and receive "intensive" or pre-vocational services for improving literacy or English language skills. These include displaced workers, TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) recipients, welfare-to-work recipients, disabled workers, and youth.

***Literacy programs: Programs that provide training in basic reading, writing, and math skills to individuals with a 0-8 reading level. They also provide beginning ESOL tutoring. Literacy programs are primarily staffed by volunteers and tend to work on a one-to-one tutoring basis.***

***ABE programs: Programs that are primarily located in community colleges and universities and provide GED preparation, intermediate and advanced ESOL classes, and pre-GED training.***

*The Activity*

**Put up around the room three signs in large letters as follows:**

- ***on the right wall: AGREE.***
- ***on the back wall: NOT SURE.***
- ***on the left wall: DISAGREE.***

**Ask everyone to stand up, rearranging desks or chairs if necessary so that people can move easily around the room. Explain that this next activity is purely for promoting discussion and there are no right or wrong answers. Say that you will read a statement aloud twice. They will listen to the statement and then move to the sign that corresponds to how they feel about the statement: AGREE, DISAGREE, or NOT SURE.**

**Tell participants when everyone is standing near a sign, you will ask people, one by one, to explain why they are standing where they are. If they change their mind after listening to other people's explanations, they may move to another sign reflecting their new opinion. They will then be asked to explain their change in thinking. Say that you hope participants will "dialogue" with each other from different sides of the room. (Note-taker should capture each person's beliefs and note if people change their minds and why.)**

**Read aloud—slowly, and as many times as needed—the first of two statements.**

***Statement One (15 minutes)***
*The prevailing view in the 1980s and 1990s, that workers lacked the literacy and/or English speaking skills to do their jobs, still holds true today.*

***Statement Two (15 minutes)***
*There is a common perception that the Workforce Investment Act has narrowed the focus of literacy education from a broad, general education to education specifically for employment.*

3. **Serving WIA customers** (45 minutes)

**Part One**

*Explain to the group that you would like to start off this next activity with hearing their success stories, if they have any, about serving WIA customers with limited literacy and/or English.*

First ask the ABE and literacy staff if they are even aware of who the WIA customers in their programs are. Explain that if they are not aware of who the WIA customers are, they still may be able to answer at least the first question; otherwise you will ask them to listen to the experiences of the others.

*Post the questions below on newsprint. After reading aloud each question, get a show of hands to see who has a story, and then ask participants to briefly relate their stories. If many people have stories, limit the number of stories you collect.*

*Success Stories*

- Does any one have a success story about a WIA customer being *referred* to a literacy and/or ABE program? Or a literacy or ABE student being *referred* to a One Stop Career Center?
- Does any one have a story about a WIA customer who *successfully participated in* an ABE or literacy program?
- Does any one have a success story about a WIA customer who participated in an ABE or literacy program and *got a job that he or she desired*?

Part Two

*Ask staff from the various programs (One Stop, ABE, literacy) to group themselves together. (If there's only one representative present from either the ABE or literacy program, combine the literacy and ABE participants into a single "educational" group, and keep the more numerous One Stop participants as a second group).*

*Explain that now you would like each group, to reflect on its own program (or programs) by considering the following question posted on newsprint:*

Evaluating Program Strengths and Weaknesses

When considering the "trail" of providing services to WIA customers (or students) with low literacy and/or English skills (assessment, referral, service, follow-up, job placement), where are your program's strengths and weaknesses in serving these adults? Consider the quality of collaboration that may exist between the One Stop and ABE programs, and the One Stop and literacy programs.

*Provide each group(the OS group, the ABE group, the literacy group—or the combined ABE/literacy group) with a separate, blank sheet of newsprint. Ask for a volunteer to make notes on program strengths and program weaknesses in serving WIA participants with low literacy and/or English skills.*



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*The notes should address all of the five categories—assessment, referral, service, follow-up, and job placement—and should be organized with a + or – under each category to represent what's working and what is not. Explain to each group that it does not need to come to consensus, but rather should capture the full diversity of perspectives on the newsprint.*

*After 15 minutes, ask each group to post its newsprint on the wall and ask everyone to silently go around and read one another's newsprints. Then have a representative from each group report out about his or her program to all the participants in the room.*

*(If the number of participants is really scant and it's impossible for people to form small groups, have participants work individually. Ask each person write notes on the strengths and weaknesses of his or her program on a separate sheet of paper—as opposed to on newsprint. Afterwards, ask each person to report out his or her evaluation to the whole group. You record each person's comments on newsprint (using a separate newsprint for the OS and for the ABE and literacy programs) so that everyone can view the comments.)*

*Once each group (or person) has reported out, ask the whole group to consider its responses to the following questions that you have prepared on newsprint:*

- Does anyone have a question for clarification, meaning you read something on a newsprint or someone said something about his or her program that you did not understand?
- What stands out for you about what is working in terms of serving WIA customers (or students) in need of literacy and or ESOL instruction?
- What stands out for you about how we could better serve these adults?

4. **Wrap Up** (10 minutes)

***Go around the group and ask each person to respond to the following question posted on newsprint. Ask participants to consider a broad range of arenas including training needs, and conditions in their places of work and communities. Encourage people to be as specific as possible. For example, if someone says, "I need more training", ask her specifically what she would like to learn more about. Record each person's response directly on the newsprint. Once each person has spoken, if time permits, conduct another round of discussion to allow for those who would like to share additional thoughts about what they personally need.***

**Self Assessment**

What do *you* need to better serve WIA customers with limited literacy and/or English speaking skills?

***Thank participants for their time and contribution to this study. Remind them that in the fall we will come back to conduct a 2-hour training around literacy issues and how better to serve WIA participants. The training design will be based on the information they shared with us today—as well as the information we will have gathered from other focus groups, directors, and WIA participants.***

{ASK IF ANYONE IS INTERESTED IN RECEIVING A SUMMARY OF OUR REPORT. GIVE OUT OVERVIEW OF STUDY AND POSTERS.

HAND OUT "CAN YOU LEND A HAND" FORMS AND STIPEND FORMS TO PARTICIPANTS FROM ABE AND LITERACY PROGRAMS.}

***[Ask the ABE and Literacy participants to stay a moment so that you can have them fill out stipend forms.]***

**WIA Participant Focus Group Protocol**
**NMCL/WIA Literacy Research Project 2002**

*[All boxed items below should be posted on newsprint beforehand. Facilitator should also come prepared with consent and stipend forms that she has already signed.]*

2. **Introduction**

The Welcome

*Welcome everyone and thank each person for taking the time to come today. Explain that you will soon talk about why we're all together and what to expect, but you'd like to begin with each person introducing himself or herself. Acknowledge that even though we'll be together for a short time, it's still nice to know a little bit about everyone so that we can all feel more comfortable.*

*One by one, ask people to say their name and one thing that they like to do. Begin with yourself.*

The Purpose of the Research Project, Its History, and How the Information From Today Will Be Used

*Briefly explain*:

I'm from a literacy organization in New Mexico called the New Mexico Coalition for Literacy. This organization was asked by the Department of Labor to find out about the experiences of adults who, for whatever the reason, never had the chance to get the education they wanted—and so don't have a high school diploma or GED—but who *are* interested in employment and who would also like some help with reading, writing, and math. We're trying to learn about how adults—like you— are and are not being supported to get the education and training they want. (The name of the contact person at the One Stop) thought all you would be good people to talk to.

We have already had the chance to talk to 120 businesses throughout the state and have asked them what they think about issues of literacy in the workplace. We've also interviewed the directors and staff of One Stop Career Centers and of literacy and adult basic education programs. But we have not yet had the chance to interview the most important people—that's you— who know first hand what it's like to come to a One Stop to get help.

*Explain that we will be together for the next two hours, where for the most part you will be listening to their experiences and asking them questions. Explain that they are the experts:*

*they know what their experiences have been like better than the counselors or teachers with whom they may be working. Tell participants there are no "right" answers – only their opinions based on their own experience.*

*Inform participants that the information from this interview will be used in at least two ways:*

1) We will include your perspectives in our final report to the state DOL.
2) We will give staff of the One Stops and ABE/literacy programs a training about how to better serve people.

> ***But we hope our project will do more, that it will really make a positive difference in helping individuals—like all of you—who are seeking education, job training, and jobs.***

Research Consent Forms and Payment (or Stipend) Forms

*Hand out the research consent form and read/review it together (cut out the jargon.) Explain that we will be writing a report about what we have learned, but we will not be using their names in the report. Explain, too, that we will be taping our conversation together because it's hard to facilitate the session and take good notes, but say that if at any time someone wishes to turn off the recorder, he or she may. (Don't overemphasize that they can turn off the recorder.) Explain that their participation is voluntary. Then give people a moment to ask any questions and to sign two consent forms – one for them to keep and one for us. (Make sure you sign these before handing them out.)*

*Next read over the payment or stipend form. Ask participants to put in their social security number, name, and address, and explain that they will receive $50 in 2-4 weeks to thank them for taking time out of their schedules to come here today and participate.*

The Ground Rules

*Explain that to make the most of our time together in a respectful and productive way, we ask that everyone follow a few guidelines that are posted on newsprint.:*

Ground Rules

| |
|---|
| Everyone tries to participate equally. |
| Listen carefully to what each other is saying. |
| Ask questions. |

Ask if anyone has any questions—about anything—before we begin.

3. **Survey**

**Part One**

*Explain that you would like to start with a survey asking 20 questions about their experiences at the One Stop and other programs ( especially literacy and adult basic education programs) that they may have gone to for assistance. Point out the survey questions on newsprint posted around the room. Say that you will read each question and ask for their response—mostly a "yes", "no", or "not relevant". Explain that you will not talk about their experiences with each question or why they responded the way they did until after you have finished all the questions in the survey. Tell them to feel free to ask you if they don't understand what a question means.*

*As facilitator, you will already have written 2 questions (and the possible responses to each question) per newsprint, so that a total of 10 newsprints should be hanging along the walls of the room. Read each question out loud and record the number of yes's, no's, not relevant's, etc., on the newsprint. Participants can just call out "yes" or "no", or you can ask, "How many people say 'yes?' and get a show of hands; then how many say, 'no?', etc. The responses to each question should total the number of participants in the room. (For questions that do not apply to a particular individual, put a check in the "not relevant" space.)*

1. Did any one at the One Stop talk to you or ask you questions about your reading, writing, math, and/or English speaking skills?
   _____ yes
   _____ no

2. Did you take a reading, writing, math, and/or English-speaking test at the One Stop or at the community college?
   _____ yes
   _____ no

3. Did you take a job skills test (that measures your interests in specific jobs or your ability to do specific jobs) at the One Stop?
   _____ yes
   _____ no

4. Did any one at the One Stop talk to you about job training?
   _____ yes, talked about it in-depth
   _____ yes, mentioned it
   _____ no

5. Did the One Stop refer you to a local literacy program or adult basic education program at the university or community college?
   _____ yes
   _____ no

6. Did the One Stop refer you to any other program or agency (other than a literacy or ABE program) to provide you with more assistance?

   _____ yes
   _____ no

7. Did the One Stop provide you with any support (such as transportation or child care) to get the education or training that you need?
   _____ yes
   _____ no
   _____ not relevant

8. Did any one at the One Stop ever check in with you outside of the One Stop office (call or meet with you) about how you were doing?
   _____ yes
   _____ no
   _____ not relevant

9. How long have you been seeking services at the One Stop?
   _____ less than 1 month
   _____ between 1-3 months
   _____ between 4-6 months
   _____ between 6-12 months
   _____ more than 1 year

10. Have you ever contacted your local literacy or ABE program?
    _____ yes
    _____ no

11. Did any one at the literacy or ABE program talk with you about what you want to achieve once you finish participation in the literacy or ABE program? (did any one talk with you about your life-long goals)?

_____ yes
_____ no
_____ not relevant

12. Did any one at the literacy or ABE program talk with you about other services in the community that could support you? (e.g., food stamps, substance abuse, voting?)

_____ yes
_____ no
_____ not relevant

13. Did any one at the ABE or literacy program ever check in with you outside of class (call or meet with you) about how you were doing?

_____ yes
_____ no
_____ not relevant

14. How long have you attended a literacy, English language or GED class or tutoring session?

_____ less than 3 months
_____ between 3-6 months
_____ between 6-12 months
_____ between 1-3 years
_____ more than 3 years
_____ not relevant

15. How well did the literacy or adult basic education program meet your needs?

_____ extremely well
_____ well
_____ not so well
_____ not at all
_____ not relevant

16. Did the One Stop provide you with job training?

_____ yes
_____ no but we have a plan for me to participate
_____ no
_____ not relevant

17. How long did the job training last (or will it last)?

_____ 1 day or less than a day
_____ between 2-5 days
_____ between 6-30 days
_____ several months but less than one year
_____ one year
_____ more than one year
_____ not relevant

18. Did you get a job?

_____ yes and am still in it
_____ yes but no longer am in it
_____ no
_____ not relevant

19. Is it a job where you can make ends meet on the pay you receive?

_____ yes
_____ no
_____ not relevant

20. How well did the One Stop Career Center meet your needs?

_____ extremely well
_____ well
_____ not so well
_____ not at all

Part Two

Let's step back and look at our responses to these questions.

*Ask*:

- Look at your responses to questions 1-7 about the One Stop (all of which have yes or no responses). What do you notice? Does anything jump out at you about your answers to these questions?
- Look at your responses to questions 10-13 that are about literacy or ABE programs. What do you notice? Does anything jump out at you about your answers to these questions?

- Look at your responses to questions 16-19 that are about job placement. What do you notice? Does anything jump out at you?

Part Three

*Now ask participants to respond to the questions posted on the following 2 newsprints. List their responses directly on the newsprint and ask them to think of as many things as they can.*

One Stop Career Center

- What is the One Stop doing well to support you and the others in this group?

- What is it not doing well?

Literacy or ABE program

- What are literacy and ABE programs doing well to support you and the others in this group?

- What are they not doing well?

4. **Beliefs about literacy**

For the next activity, I'm going to ask what you think about the following three statements which I'll read to you. I'll read each statement a number of times; then I'm going to ask you to stand up and place yourself by the sign that reflects your opinion.

*On the right wall, post "Agree", on the back wall, "Unsure", and on the left wall, "Disagree". Explain that after they place themselves by the sign that reflects their opinion, you will ask them why they are standing where they are standing. Tell participants they are welcome to change their minds if they hear something from someone else that gets them thinking in a different way.*

*Then read statement 1 and let participants "weigh in." Repeat the same process for statements 2 and 3.*

***Statement 1.***
*Many workers today lack the literacy or English-speaking skills to do their jobs well.*

***Statement 2.***
*Many workers today lack the literacy or English-speaking skills to advance in their jobs.*

***Statement 3.***
*Education today is more about helping people get a job and less about helping people with other needs and interests, such as writing a note to their child's teacher, balancing a checkbook, dealing with landlords, or voting.*

5. **Advice**

*Consider doing the following activity as a role-play where you first show the group the picture of the person they are to give advice to, and then you take on that character. The trick is to also be able to take notes on newsprints you will have already labeled: Advice for Liticia, Advice for the One Stop, Advice for Literacy or ABE programs, Advice for Employer, and Advice for Others*

*Explain to the group that Liticia is a hard-working woman who takes care of her 3 children, often cares for her mother who is sick, and had to leave school when she was in the 6th grade to help out her family. Her husband recently left her and she needs to find work. When she was a child, she used to dream that she would be a nurse as she liked caring for others and was interested in how the body works. She has not thought about this dream for many years.*

A. *<u>Post or pass around the picture of Liticia,</u> a tired woman with shoulders sagging who looks discouraged but still has some spunk. Explain to the group that they are Liticia's friends. She has come to them for advice about how to feed her family. What would they tell her about what she should do? (If the group does not mention her dream about becoming a nurse, prompt them with a question such as:* And what about her dream of being a nurse? Should she let that go?*) Record participant responses on the newsprint.*

*Leticia* (drawn by Rena Paradis)



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**B.** *Next, pass around a picture of Jose, a Hispanic professional who works at the One Stop, and who sits at a desk with a computer. Explain that Liticia has come to the One Stop for the first time. What advice would they give Jose on how best to help Liticia? Record all responses on the newsprint.*

*Jose* (drawn by Rena Paradis)

**C.** *Next, pass around a picture of Laurie, a white literacy teacher who is surrounded by books. Ask the group what advice they would give Laurie on how best to help Liticia. Record responses on the newsprint.*

*Laurie* (drawn by Rena Paradis)

**D.** *And last, pass around a picture of Dean, an employer at a nursing home where Liticia finds work cooking for the elderly patients. Ask the group what advice they would give Dean, who manages the nursing home, on how best to help Liticia.*

*Dean* (drawn by Rena Paradis)

6. **Wrap up**
*Ask the group*:

What do you feel about what you heard today?

*If the group is not responding, ask*:

What do you think about what it takes to get a job that you desire?

*Thank everyone very much for their important contribution to the project. Then ask who would be interested in attending the fall training. Take down their names and say someone will call them to tell them the exact date and time.*

# Training for Participants

*in the NMCL/WIA 2002 Literacy Research Project*

**New Mexico Coalition for Literacy**

**Training for Participants**
**in the NMCL/WIA 2002 Literacy Research Project**

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Objectives:

1. To learn about and discuss some of the preliminary findings from the NMCL/WIA research project about the basic skills and job training that adults with difficulties reading, writing, or speaking English receive.
2. To consider some of the solutions presented in the research data for how to better serve the population of need.
3. To identify next steps for better serving the population of need.

Time: 2 hours (plus extra time for eating)

Materials:

- Newsprint
- Markers (at least 4)
- Masking tape
- Name tags
- Post cards with postage stamps (1 per participant)
- Stickers (any variety; 1 per participant plus a few extra)
- Strips of colored paper, each with a positive or negative "force" written on it
- Food (facilitator decides if it's best to feed people before, during, or after the training)

Preparations:

- Prepare the 5 newsprints ahead of time (Objectives, Agenda, Group Guidelines, Preliminary Findings, and Solutions)
- For the force-field activity, prepare all the positive and negative forces (that coordinators of the project will have sent you) for each of the 3 players: people in need of services, OS staff, and ABE/literacy program staff. Print out the positive and negative forces for individuals in need of services on one color of paper, for OS staff on another color, and for ABE/literacy staff on a third color. Cut each of the forces into separate strips of paper. Put a rubber band around each group of forces so that you have a total of 6 bundles in 3 different colors.
- Make enough copies of the detailed solutions handout that coordinators of the project will have sent you. You'll need one solutions handout per participant.
- Arrange the room so that people can sit around a table and face one another

- Put the newsprint pad on an easel or find a way to hang your newsprints
- Put out name tags for people to put on before you begin
- Prepare the logistics for having the food arrive. Have a place to lay out the food and all the eating hardware (cups, napkins, plates, forks, etc.)
- Let people know where the restrooms are

**Training Outline**

[All boxed items below should be prepared on newsprint beforehand.]

1. **Welcome, Introductions, Training Objectives, Agenda, and Group Guidelines (15 minutes)**

   The Welcome

   Welcome everyone to today's training.

   Introductions

   Have each person introduce herself by telling the group why she is at the table today,

   OR,

   if you want a more interactive introductory activity, have the group do the following: Ask each person to introduce herself by saying her name plus a word she might use to describe herself that begins with the same first letter as the first letter of her first name. Explain that the whole group can help by brainstorming words with the same first letter as someone's first name, but the person introducing herself gets to decide on the word she prefers. So for example, if someone's name is Judy, the group may generate words like justice, joyful, and jolly, and Judy can pick the word that she feels is the best fit. If it's difficult to think of a word (for example, if the person's name is Owen), consider alternatives such as using nouns (opal, orange).

   [Use this variation *only if the group has 8 or fewer participants.* Each time someone introduces herself, the group repeats the name/descriptive word for those who have already introduced themselves and adds on the new person's name and description. So for example, if we begin with joyful Judy, the group repeats joyful Judy.

Then we move to funny Frank, and the group says: joyful Judy, funny Frank. Then we go to lovely Lisa, and the group says joyful Judy, funny Frank, lovely Lisa. Continue until the last person has introduced herself and there is one final chorus by the entire group that says everyone's name and description, e.g., joyful Judy, funny Frank, lovely Lisa, smart Sandy, justice Joan, and dignified Diane.]

Objectives

Present the following newsprint of objectives for today's training:

**Objectives**

- To learn about and discuss some of the preliminary findings from the NMCL/WIA research project about the basic skills and job training that adults with difficulties reading, writing, or speaking English receive.
- To consider some of the solutions presented in the research data for how to better serve the population of need.
- To identify next steps for better serving the population of need.

Agenda

Present the following newsprint with the training agenda:

**Agenda**

1. Introductions and overview
2. Force-Field analysis *
3. Solutions
4. Next Steps
5. Closure

*Briefly explain force-field analysis— that it is a framework developed by sociologist, Kurt Lewin, that places an individual in a field of forces, forces that support and hinder action towards a goal. So that in our study for

example, the goal is for people with difficulties reading, writing, or speaking English to get the education and training they need to get decent jobs. We will look at what supports and hinders such a person in accomplishing that goal *as well as* what supports and hinders program staff to help that person along his or her path.

Group Guidelines

Let the group know that we have only 2 hours together to accomplish quite a bit, after which we will share some food together (if that's how you arranged it.) Say that the design is interactive and participants will be doing most of the work. You would like to post a few guidelines for using the time productively and respectfully.

Present the following group guidelines:

**Group Guidelines**

- Each person participates equally*
- We listen carefully to what each person is saying
- We ask questions **

* Explain that each person does not necessarily need to talk the same amount of time. But you would like those who tend to want to share a lot to be mindful that we would like to hear from all the people in the room. Explain that people come to this table with many different kinds of experience: directors, teachers, people trying to get services. All are important and the strength of this project is that we have so many different perspectives on each issue, and we want to hear all of them. Tell people this means that you will sometimes ask them to limit what they are saying, so that we can hear from the others and also finish within 2 hours.

** Tell people to ask questions of each other if they do not understand a point someone is trying to make, as well as to ask questions of you about the process or anything else that may concern them.

## 2. Force-Field Activity (60 minutes)

Introduce the preliminary findings as a way of starting the force-field activity. Tell the group there were exceptions to the findings, but the exceptions were few. Then present the preliminary findings:

Preliminary Findings

It seems that the most significant finding of this study is that:

1. The lower your literacy skills, the least likely you are to receive education and training services;

2. Without a GED or High School Diploma, the population of need is relegated to low wage, dead end jobs.

Explain that the force-field activity will give the group a chance to hear more about our finding, i.e., what is working and what is not working in terms of helping people who have difficulties reading, writing, or speaking English to get the education and training they need to secure decent jobs. Tell the group the activity is designed so that we can try to get into the shoes of each of the major "players" in our study and see the issue from that player's point of view. The 3 major players are: 1) adults with difficulties reading, writing, or speaking English who want decent jobs; 2) the staff of the One Stop, and 3)) staff at adult basic education and literacy programs. Explain that we know there are differences across the many individuals in need of services, across the One Stops, and across the ABE and literacy programs. Also explain that the "forces" about to be heard do not represent any one particular One Stop, literacy/ABE program, or individual; rather, they are a "composite" or a collection of the similarities and the differences that we heard across communities, programs, and individuals.

Place the prepared strips of cut paper, each with a positive or negative force, in 6 piles along the center of the table in this order: 1) positive forces for people in need of services, 2) negative forces for people in need of services, 3) positive forces for the OS staff, 4) negative forces for the OS staff, 5) positive forces for the ABE and literacy providers, and 6) negative forces for the ABE and literacy providers.

Explain to the group that on each piece of paper is a quote from our study that represents a force that supports or hinders our goal of getting people who are most in need decent jobs. Emphasize that the forces were not made up by the researchers but come directly from our interviews.

Say that you will start with the most important voice, that of people seeking or in need of OS and ABE/literacy services.

Step One (1 minute): Ask for a volunteer who either works at the OS or at an ABE or literacy program (**NOT** an adult seeking services) to put herself in the role of representing the many adults with difficulties reading, writing, or speaking English and who also need of work. Explain that the volunteer will come to the head of the table so people can address her directly. The volunteer's job is 1) to listen to all the forces the others will read to her, and 2) to pay attention to the thoughts and feelings that arise as she hears the forces. She will not be asked to respond to what people are saying until *after* all the forces are read. Explain that you will then ask her for reactions and comments.

Choose a volunteer and position her at the head of the table.

Step Two (12 minutes): Next ask the people sitting on one side of the table to take strips of paper from pile #1 representing forces supporting individuals in need of services. Encourage the participants to divide the strips evenly among themselves. Similarly, ask the people sitting on the other side of the table to take strips from pile #2, the forces hindering people in need of services. **[If individuals in need of services are present, be aware that some may have difficulties with reading. Explain that if there is anyone who would rather not read, that's fine. His or her job will be to listen carefully.]**

Explain to the group that they will read aloud one force at a time as if they were a voice inside the head of the person in need of services. Encourage people to look directly at the person they are addressing and to speak with conviction, *feeling* the words as much as possible and how the words support or make it difficult for the person in need of services to accomplish her goal. Ask participants to go back and forth between positive and negative forces in a spontaneous fashion, speaking out and building on what was said before. (In other words, they don't need to follow any particular order, but should speak out their force when it seems to fit with what was said before, either alternating between positive and negatives, or reading a string of negative forces followed by a string of positive forces, until all the forces have been spoken.)

Step Three (2 minutes): Once all the forces have been read, ask the volunteer at the head of the table:

- *How did it feel to hear all these forces?*

Round 2 – OS forces (15 minutes):
Repeat this same process for the forces representing the OS staff. Ask for another volunteer, but this time someone who is NOT from the OS, to come to the head of the table. Ask the people who last time read negative forces to this time read positive forces from the OS pile, and those who read positive forces

the last time to read negative forces from the OS pile. Once all forces have been read, ask the volunteer for her reactions or comments. Then ask the whole group its reactions.

Round 3 – ABE/Literacy program forces (15 minutes):
Repeat this process the third and final time with the forces representing ABE and literacy workers. Ask for a volunteer who does NOT work with an ABE or literacy program to come to the head of the table. Have people to take strips from the ABE/literacy program piles, with those who read negative forces the second round to read positive forces this round; and those who read positive forces the second round to read negative forces this round. Ask for reactions and comments from the volunteer and then from the entire group once all the forces have been read out.

Whole Group Discussion(10 minutes):
Once all the rounds have been completed, ask the group:

- *What stands out for you about all the forces that you heard?*
- *Do they ring true?*

If people say they don't think the forces represent the experience in their community, encourage them to explain why. Say again that although the forces come directly from the data, there will be variation across communities and we want to hear what they would like to change. Post their comments on newsprint.

As a way to wrap up this activity, tell participants that the purpose of this activity was:

a) to help each of us better understand the experience and perspectives of those in different roles (so as to be more compassionate and effective)
b) to let us hear about what is working and what is not across a broad spectrum of perspectives
c) to model a way of problem solving using the force-field framework which can be used in their places of work with staff and customers/students.

**3. Solutions (20 minutes):**

Say that they have probably understood by now that the theory behind a force-field is to problem solve not only ways to reduce the hindering forces, but also ways to strengthen the supporting forces. In other words, it is important when trying to improve services to consider both how to build upon what is working as well as to eliminate what is not working.

Present the following newsprint:

**Solutions**

- Marketing/outreach
- Partnerships and collaboration
- Better case management
- On-the-job-training

Explain that just as with the forces, the solutions come directly from the data. Let people know that these solutions do not represent all the solutions suggested; however, they are among the most common. Then pass out copies of the more detailed solutions handout and read each of the solutions aloud to the group, being mindful that the WIA participants present might have difficulties reading and will need the oral reinforcement. Explain that at this point, you do not have time to discuss the proposed solutions, but that you would like to know if anyone has other solutions. Ask:

➢ *What other solutions, if any, would you like to offer?*

Encourage people to consider ways to both reduce the negative forces and build on the positive forces. Record any additional solutions that are offered by the group on the newsprint.

**4. Next Steps (20 minutes):**

Now give participants one sticker each and have them write their name on it. Then ask everyone to come to the flip chart and vote for the one solution that s/he would most like to work on by placing his/her sticker next to a solution of choice. Once everyone has voted, break the participants into small groups according to the solution they've chosen. If any solution has only one sticker, ask the person(s) who voted for that particular solution if s/he would like to join another group; otherwise s/he will have to work on her own for the next activity—which is fine if s/he wants to stay with the solution s/he voted for.

{JUDY: I CAN'T DELETE THIS INDENTATION FOR THE FOLLOWING PARAGRAPH. I'M HOPING YOU CAN.}

> As people are dividing into groups, say that because time is limited, they will have only a few minutes to talk about ways to address the solution. Explain that after those few minutes of discussion, you will ask each person—in each group—to identify one concrete next step that s/he will take to deal with the solution and move it forward. Say that the people in a group may decide to all take a similar next step (e.g., to meet for lunch next Wednesday at such and such

a time and place), or each person may decide to take a different next step (e.g., one to talk to a case manager next Monday at the OS about qualifying for training; another to talk with colleagues about ways to better ask clients about their needs.) Explain that participants should be as specific as possible with their next step and identify when, where, how, and with whom they will take that action. Explain, too, that once they are in their small groups, you will pass out stamped postcards. Each individual is to record his or her specific next step directly on the postcard, beginning with the stem, *I will....* Tell participants to self-address the postcard (address it to themselves at their homes), that you will collect the cards, and that the research team will mail the cards to each participant on December 1 to remind everyone present of his or her next step.

[When you are passing out the postcards, quietly, on a one-to-one basis, assist anyone who needs help with writing.]

**5. Closure (5 minutes):**

Reconvene the entire group and ask participants to say or read aloud their planned next step. Collect the postcards. Explain that you know today's time together was limited, but you hope people will stay connected with one another to continue to improve the services they offer. Let them know that you will share their reactions to the data with the research team and that NMCL is available to provide further assistance. Encourage them to think about ways of trying a force-field analysis, or a modified version, with the people with whom they work or with fellow students. Remind everyone that in mid-December the final report for this project will be completed and will be available at the NMCL's website: www.nmcl.org.

Thank participants for their contribution to the study and for attending today's training.

Eat and Enjoy!

## Positive Forces for OS Staff

*A lot of our clients have numerous barriers, whether they are psychological barriers, abuse and domestic violence issues. Our front line folks who do 99.9% of the work have become quite acute at having identified these barriers.*

***I believe in education. I believe everyone can learn, even if they have mental disabilities. People who need help with speaking or reading English are ashamed. They think they're alone. People have to know that they can do it. They have to know they are worthy of success and then they can accomplish it. Drop outs need more counseling, more therapy. They have to go further in, inside of themselves, so they can come out of whatever they're in.***

**I think there's a lot of age discrimination and sex discrimination. All of a sudden a 60 year old needs a GED to do the job he's been doing for the last 40 years? We try to let the employer know that there may be a lot of qualified applicants that do not have a GED or high school diploma that could do the job just as well as one that does. We try to *not* make it just a set rule for all the job orders to require a high school diploma. We call the employer to find a way around the requirement.**

**One of my clients told me, "You give us everything here at the One Stop, everything. You tell us how to dress for an interview, give us advice for the interview, and then you'll want to know what happens, if we got the job or not. It's almost like telling us, "I'll go with you." You prepare us. You don't just say, "OK, have a nice day."**

**I consider myself a success story. I was a teenage mom, high school drop out, and had to go and get my GED. I got under the Department of Labor program, went on to the Jr. College, got my associates degree And after several different jobs, now work for the DOL. So I really push this WIA program because I know how it works.**

## Negative Forces for OS Staff

***We have 350 WIA caseloads and 3 people to run it. There's 25-30 people in the lobby on a Friday, our slow day. We run at least 30 programs out of the office. We're too short staffed and clients are in and out. We rush the assessment for example. The client's not always job-ready; could be psychological issues. Assessment and referral get rushed and the client doesn't get a chance to think about what she or he wants.***

**The intent of the WIA by Congress was to involve the private sector. But what they didn't anticipate was that a bureaucracy would be formed of the WIA boards, the decision-makers. It's breeding. It's alive. It's swallowing up money. It's skyrocketed with administrative costs. These are monies that are not going to the client. There's total ignorance of the situation by the decision-makers.**

**DOL isn't known for providing services and referrals. It's known for unemployment insurance. We have a level of information that we put out and it doesn't get to the people to whom we are supposed to provide services. We don't advertise enough of the programs that we do have…We don't have enough air time on radio or TV or enough PSAs out there to tell people what we have. We don't put out any media information and that hurts. But the WIA doesn't give us any money to do marketing.**

**It's tough for grown-ups to start studying again. Most everyone knows about ABE. I don't think we've placed emphasis in pursuing problems of illiteracy, but it's a big problem. People who want their GED do it on their own. When they come to us, they are already with obligations and feel that getting a GED is a waste of their time. Yet without a GED, it's almost impossible to upgrading earnings…Illiteracy is a complex problem. By the time they're here, it's too late.**

**Most clients need to go to work now, and training must be done while they are working. They have families to support. This curtails their attendance in some ABE and ESOL classes. One client I referred couldn't read or write in English or Spanish. He made the appointment with ABE, but then got a 60-hour a week job in construction. He needed to work to support his family. This is indicative of the economic times.**

**Solutions**

- Marketing/outreach: Reach out to those who are not being served: people in outlying communities, people who are older, people with low literacy skills.

- Partnerships and collaboration: Initiate a formal system for working together where all partners take responsibility for communicating with one another.

- Better case management:
  *Intake:* Go beyond what customers initially say as to why they are seeking services (immediate short-term goals) and also explore long-term goals. Make the full range of services available to individuals. So at the One Stop, for example, tell people about job training and describe in detail the steps to get there.

  *Advocacy*: Help employers and teachers/tutors see that people's experience counts. Encourage clients/students to take the steps required to achieve.

  *Referral*: Take into account the "whole" person: consider educational, employment, emotional, and physical needs and make referrals that address those needs.

  *Follow-up*: Create a formal system where the promise at the *first* point of contact with clients is that you will check up regularly on their progress.

- On the job training: Work with employers to create opportunities for people to get the training they need *while* they are working.

New Mexico Coalition for Literacy
1-800-233-7587
www.nmcl.org

*Solutions*, WIA Research Project 2002

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"You cannot uneducate the person who has learned to read. You cannot humiliate the person who feels pride. You cannot oppress the people who are not afraid anymore."

César Chávez

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